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A MEMOIR

OF

EDWARD ASKEW SOTHERN.

BY

T. EDGAR PEMBERTON.

FOURTH EDITION.

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RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
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INTRODUCTION.

More than eight years have elapsed since Edward Askew Sothern, one of the most original and popular of modern comedians, passed away, yet, beyond some appreciative mention of him in recent volumes of interesting literary and theatrical reminiscences, no life of him has appeared. Long have I felt that there should exist some record of his remarkable stage career, and of the place that he held in the hearts of those who knew, understood, and loved him. Finding that two short articles from my pen concerning him that appeared in the pages of *The Theatre* magazine attracted some attention, and subsequently having been fortunate enough

to obtain the help of the surviving members of his family and near friends (who gave me considerable material, for which I here desire to thank them), I resolved to attempt a biography, and tell the story of his experiences as an actor.

I knew him intimately — well enough to appreciate his merits, and to understand his faults—and I found in him, as many others did, the most tender, considerate, vigilant, and warm-hearted of friends. If this work does a tardy justice to one who was the brilliant star (in his case I might say, comet) of many seasons, my labour will be amply repaid.

T. EDGAR PEMBERTON.

June 11*th*, 1889.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
SOTHERN ON THE STAGE	1
SOTHERN OFF THE STAGE	113
SOTHERN IN THE HUNTING-FIELD	175
SOTHERN IN HIGH SPIRITS	199
CONCLUSION	303
POSTSCRIPT TO THE THIRD EDITION	308

ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

SOTHERN AS "LORD DUNDREARY"... ... *On Cover*

FACSIMILE OF ENVELOPE 210

FACSIMILE OF BANK-NOTE 302

A MEMOIR

OF

EDWARD ASKEW SOTHERN.

CHAPTER I.

SOTHERN ON THE STAGE.

"SIR,

"The press of business previous to the closing of our season has prevented my answering your note earlier, and I now write to assure you that I witnessed your performance at Weymouth with much pleasure.

"Our company for next season is complete, and from my connection with Mr. Keeley, I am not quite my own master; but as I shall be *alone* in management next September I shall be happy to hear from you about Easter-time, when I will enter into communication with you respecting an engagement at my theatre. In the meantime I

hope you will keep yourself in constant practice, without which natural talent is of little avail. I thought your acting in 'Used Up' *very good indeed*, but in *Claude Melnotte* it suggested itself to me that you occasionally 'preached' too much, instead of giving vent to the impulse of the character. In the third act, when you brought *Pauline* to your mother's cottage, you were scarcely subdued enough in your action. The head erect, with eye to eye, bespoke too much on your part the injured man, rather than one who had deeply wronged another. Your entrance in the first act should have been, I think, more excited and rapid. The character of the young Frenchman should at once be developed to his audience by an exhibition of that enthusiasm consequent on his village victory, which afterwards wins for him the soldier's laurels on the field of battle.

"You will, I am sure, excuse my pointing out to you what struck me as wrong in your conception. I would not do so, but that I think you are in possession of talents that may one day work their way in London, provided they are

properly cultivated. Your faults generally were those of a novice, which practice will conquer.

"Pray accept my best wishes for your success, and, hoping to hear from you at the time I have stated, believe me,

"Yours truly,

"CHARLES KEAN."

In October, 1851, in this kindly yet critical fashion, wrote the foremost actor of his day to a young stage beginner destined to secure a fame and popularity of which the old-day players had little dreamt. It was Edward Askew Sothern who, nervously enough, no doubt, had played on the boards of the old-fashioned Weymouth Theatre *Sir Charles Coldstream* and *Claude Melnotte*, under the very eye of the great Charles Kean; and it was Edward Askew Sothern who, ten years later on, revolutionized the theatrical world of London.

Prior to the Weymouth performance the young actor had had some experience both as an amateur and a professional. He was born in Liverpool, on April 1, 1826 ("*Dundreary* and his *Brother Sam* are naturally April fools," he was

wont in after-life to say), and had been intended by his father for the Church or for the Bar; but though for either calling every facility was offered him, he would take to neither, and, the theatrical instinct being strong within him, he, from a very early age, made up his mind that he would be an actor. The elder Sothern, a wealthy merchant, colliery proprietor, and ship-owner, had the strong objection characteristic of his day to all things connected with the stage, allowing his children to "go to the play" but once in the course of the year, and disliked the idea of his son taking part in private theatricals. In spite, however, of parental advice and admonition (you might as well have advised a duckling not to take to water) the boy contrived to gratify his inclinations. While still at school he managed to pay surreptitious Saturday night visits to a penny theatre hard by his home. His soul was fired by the blood-curdling melodramas that he saw there, and the glorious and never-to-be-forgotten experience of having been permitted to cross the stage of a real theatre during a "rally" in the clown's scenes that succeed pantomime (they were in

those days the great feature in pantomime). He gave on one of his half-holidays, assisted by his schoolfellows, a *matinée*, at which, in the two or three farces that were produced, he played all the comic parts, and, between each interval, sang a song. A little later on, having declined to enter upon a clerical, legal, or even medical career—which had also been offered to him—and while he was making futile efforts to accustom himself to the routine of work in his father's office, he joined the "Sheridan Amateur Dramatic Society," where real actresses were engaged, and the pieces were performed with some degree of completeness. Very speedily he became the "leading man" of this local histrionic club, and, having delighted himself and his young friends in such light pieces as "Othello" and "The Gamester," he became quite certain as to his destiny and calling. For an amateur to obtain a hearing on the *bonâ fide* stage was in those days a far more difficult matter than it is now; but chance favoured Sothern, for in the spring of 1849 he was staying with wealthy friends at St. Helier's, Jersey, and the Theatre Royal at that little town was under

the temporary management of a Mons. Gilmer, and being asked, as at that time was the custom, for their patronage, Sothern's friends suggested to the manager that he should give the ambitious amateur a chance on the regular boards. Mons. Gilmer, whose one aim was to get sufficiently good houses to enable him to leave the island, consented, and, being a man of much theatrical experience, put Sothern through his facings in the character of *Claude Melnotte*, in which it was decided that his first appearance should be made. Even to-day Mons. Gilmer does not speak in very enthusiastic terms of his pupil or his first performance; but that it was eminently satisfactory to the stage-struck Sothern is proved by the fact that he at once determined to burn his boats, and become an actor in right-down earnest. Warned by his tutor-manager that he was not likely to endure the drudgery of his proposed professional career so long as he had money to spend and to live upon, his first step was to squander every farthing in his possession (a task that his ever pleasure-loving nature made an exceedingly easy one), and being thus by his own act reduced to

the necessity of working, he adopted the pseudonym of "Douglas Stuart," and became a regular member of the St. Helier's stock company. Here, with much courage and very characteristic perseverance, he played a great number of parts, his adopted name continually figuring in the play-bills in comedy, melodrama, and farce. The name of Stuart he retained until, following the advice of Mr. Lester Wallack, he abandoned it for his own. This was not, however, until he had secured something like a recognized position on the American stage, and he has left it on record that one of his reasons (the initial one was, of course, the objection taken by his family to his sudden plunge into the theatrical world) for continuing to act under an assumed name was that he hoped his friends would never know anything of the struggles and privations through which, during the early days of his self-chosen career, he had to pass.

In Jersey he no doubt did a great deal of rough, useful work. Speaking years afterwards at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, at a performance given for the benefit of his friend, Mr. J. C. Smith, who, in 1849, was also a member of the

company playing at the St. Helier's Theatre, he told the audience how he had played *Hamlet* to the *bénéficiare's Ghost*; but, prior to this great opportunity, there were many less ambitious appearances, and at least one in Shakespeare's immortal play, in which he was cast for *Laertes*, the *Ghost*, and the *Second Actor*.

In connection with this undertaking (in those days at the smaller provincial theatres by no means an uncommon one) an amusing anecdote has been handed down. To assist poor young "Stuart," a memorandum was attached to the wings telling him when to make his changes. Some practical joker took this down, and the consequence was that the *Second Actor, Laertes*, and the *Ghost*, were, since the nervous performer was now merely relying upon his memory, continually appearing on the stage in the wrong character. "Oh, the agony of those moments and of that night!" groaned Sothern, as he recalled the incident in after-years. "Fancy the *Ghost* going on to act as *Laertes!*"

From Jersey to Weymouth is not a very far cry, and this brings me back to the commence-

ment of my chapter, and the performance of "The Lady of Lyons" and "Used Up," at which Charles Kean was present, and concerning which he wrote so encouragingly. Pending the time when he was to write to the great actor and manager respecting a London appearance, Sothern, accepting such engagements as came in his way, drifted to Wolverhampton, and while there an event occurred which mapped out his career.

The Mons. Gilmer of the Jersey days, who was closely connected with the fortunes of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, was about to take a benefit in the great midland town, and, hearing that his struggling and ambitious young friend was in the neighbourhood, good-naturedly offered him the opportunity of appearing before a larger and more critical audience than had hitherto come in his way. Sothern jumped at the chance, and accordingly appeared on the boards of the old Birmingham Theatre as *Frank Friskley*, in the well-known farce entitled "Boots at the Swan." The excellence of his acting at once caught the critical eye of Mr. Simpson, the then manager of the theatre; he was offered an engage-

ment, and became a member of the company. That Sothern attached great importance to this step in his professional career is amply proved by the fact that when, some eleven years later, he made his first appearance as *Lord Dundreary* at the Haymarket, he caused himself to be announced as "formerly of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham." "What a difference," I often heard him say, when in the days of his fame he revisited the town, "between the time when I came over from Wolverhampton to play *Frank Friskley* on these boards, and right thankfully accepted an engagement at thirty shillings a week, and now, when I turn money away from the doors! But the difference is more in the public than in me. I was probably as good an actor then as I am now. Like many other men, I wanted finding out, and I must confess that I have been very lucky." In those days Mr. Simpson was the manager of more than one theatre, and, after a short but satisfactory engagement in Birmingham, Sothern was told off to play in Liverpool; but, disliking this enforced return in his 'prentice days to his native town, he gave up the idea of waiting for his opportunity

with Kean, and accepted an offer that was made to him to try his fortune in America.

At the National Theatre, Boston, at a salary of twenty-five dollars a week, he made his first American appearance, playing *Dr. Pangloss* in "The Heir-at-Law," and a part in the farce called "John Dobbs." The selection of the comedy proved to be a most unfortunate one. Sothern's failure as *Dr. Pangloss* was complete, and so mercilessly and unanimously was his acting cut up in the papers that, to use his own words, he was forthwith "dismissed for incapacity." Somewhat discouraged, but happily not disheartened, by this luckless venture, he then accepted an engagement, at a reduced salary, to play juvenile parts at the Howard Athenæum in the same city.

Of these early American days Mrs. J. R. Vincent, a veteran actress on the Boston stage, and Sothern's lifelong friend, has written * as follows: "'Douglas Stuart' was tall, willowy, and lithe, with a clear, red-and-white, English complexion;

* In a pleasant little book concerning Sothern, entitled "Birds of a Feather," that appeared eleven years ago in America. His own carefully marked and corrected copy of this brief record has been entrusted to me.

bright blue eyes; wavy, brown hair; graceful in his carriage, and well calculated physically to conciliate the heart of any susceptible woman. He lived at the same house with me, and I soon found that he had all the simplicity and buoyancy of a child. He was not rich—anything but that—but invariably charitable and generous to the extent of prodigality.

"The opening night was not a success. You can fancy the appearance of a boy on the stage. I should say he was three or four and twenty, but behind the footlights he did not look as if he were more than sixteen. He had a singularly sweet voice.

"'Douglas Stuart's' next move was to the Howard Athenæum. I remember an incident that occurred at this period which illustrates a phase of his character to which I have just referred. One of the actors (his name was Sneider), a quiet, well-behaved, inoffensive man, who was very poor, was suddenly taken ill. Stuart, learning this fact, went to the head-quarters of Sneider, where he found the friendless, penniless fellow more dead than alive, in a miserable back attic, and became

his constant nurse. Apparently he was in the last stage of consumption, and but for the care, comfort, and attention rendered by his new-found friend he probably would have died. I have seen him two or three times within a few years, and he never fails to speak in the most enthusiastic terms of the kindness and affection shown him during that sickness.

"The first impression produced by 'Douglas Stuart' as an actor was not a favourable one. The truth is he had been over-praised. The manager of the National Theatre had announced it in advance that he was going to bring to America 'the greatest actor that had ever appeared on its stage,' and thus had aroused the expectations of the people to such a degree that they were naturally disappointed; hence his failure. Besides, he was not old enough to make a sensation. He could not even 'make-up' properly, although his education was correct, and he was perfect in whatever part he undertook. I do not remember the different pieces that he played, yet I recall the fact that they were remarkably well done for so young a man. But, oh, how sensitive he was!—

especially when the papers cut him up, which they did without stint."

At the Howard Athenæum Sothern did better than at the National Theatre, but, feeling that his chances of experience were small, he very soon went to New York, and succeeded in obtaining an engagement with Mr. Barnum to play twice daily at his famous Museum. Here he got the practice that he so much needed, at last acquired the art of self-possession, and was thus able to study his audiences. His next step was an engagement at Washington, at a salary of forty dollars a week, and this was followed by successful appearances at Baltimore and other cities. Although by no means regarded as a star, his acting must in those days have impressed all true critics, as the following, written by one who closely watched his progress, will show. The play was Buckstone's "Flowers of the Forest":—

"These 'Flowers' were a sort of gipsy gang of astonishing appropriating powers, and among them the 'character' is the 'Kinchin.' The 'Kinchin,' as I remember him, is a swarthy, lank individual, out at elbows and knees, ungainly and

gaunt. When the rest of the thieves come into the shanty, and bring out the various fine valuables they have captured, the 'Kinchin' takes a bandana handkerchief from one pocket, something equally trivial from every pocket, ending, if I remember, with a wretched chicken, which is drawn out of his breast and rushes about the stage. The gang roar with laughter, and chaff him tremendously; but can I ever forget the look of pathetic grief at their ingratitude assumed by the 'Kinchin'? Shall I ever lose one tone of the injured 'Kinchin's' voice when afterwards, a more serious mood having overtaken him, he said, '*Hevery* one's against *me*. A swell General, *he* goes hinto a henemmy's country, and kills hevery one he meets —and burns their willages—and they cover him with stars, and blows a trumpet for *him*. Hi just collar a hen or a handkerchief—they blows no trumpet for *me*,—they whips me, and gives me 'ancuffs to carry. It's shameful, it is. It quite 'urts my feelings.'

"I don't think I should have hesitated to prophecy in that moment—it must have been fifteen years ago—that the Mr. Stuart who played

the part of 'Kinchin' would some day be a much more famous man than I expected. And, indeed, he has become famous, for I see him to-day as the great impersonator of *Dundreary*."

At length the feet of the wandering, hard-working young actor touched firm ground, and he became a recognized member of Mr. Wallack's company; but the parts allotted him were so small, and his chances of real distinction seemed so remote, that just before the long-expected opportunity came he had almost made up his mind to abandon the stage, return to England, and seek some other employment. Sothern was the hardest of workers; and although there seemed very little likelihood of his being called upon to play them, he constantly studied (sitting up until four o'clock in the morning, and applying himself all day when there was no rehearsal) the parts undertaken by Lester Wallack. Miss Matilda Heron had been engaged to play *Camille* in a version of "La Dame aux Camélias," and three days before the production, which was regarded with considerable apprehension, he was asked if he could study the long and important part of *Armand Duval*. To the sur-

prise of the management, it was found that he was already "up" in it. It was at once given to him, and at the performance, which was in every way a pronounced success, he received, for the first time in his life, several enthusiastic "calls." This settled matters in more ways than one, and, having played under the direction of Mr. Wallack for about four years, he left him, and joined the company of Miss Laura Keene, then acting in New York in a theatre which bore the name of its manageress.

How hard he worked in these days, and how home-sick he often felt, will be gathered from some extracts from letters that he wrote at the time to one of his oldest companions and most intimate friends in England :—

"The remembrances brought up by your few lines on the old place took me many, many years back. I saw myself, as you so well described, standing gazing on the river, and a long, struggling tear forced its way down a cheek that fate has done naught but cuff for years. But, God be praised, there are brighter days in store, and I am as much the old Ned Sothern in heart and

feeling as ever, though grey hairs have been forced through the hotbed of my weary skull. If I have no genius, I at least have indisputable perseverance."

A month later he wrote—

"I've made a big mark in New York this season. My time is as sure to come, if I live, as there is a sun in the heavens."

The desire to return to and act in his own country was so strong within him that, hoping quickly to raise the wherewithal for the venture, he speculated during an "off-season" as a manager, and wrote almost definitely about an appearance in Liverpool, saying—

"I send you my list of crack parts. What is your opinion of them?

'School for Scandal'	*Charles Surface.*
'Heir at Law'	*Dr. Pangloss.*
'Old Heads and Young Hearts'	*Lyttleton Coke.*
'She Stoops to Conquer' ...	*Young Marlow.*
'The Rivals'	*Bob Acres.*
'London Assurance'	*Charles Courtley.*
'Much Ado About Nothing' ...	*Benedick.*
'Bachelor of Arts'	*Harry Jaspar.*
'Laugh When You Can' ...	*Gossamer.*
'The Marble Heart'	*Raphael.*

'Camille' ...	...	... *Armand.*
'The Wife' ...	...	... *St. Pierre.*
'The Lady of Lyons' ...		... *Claude Melnotte.*

'Used Up,' 'Poor Pillicoddy,' 'Twenty Minutes with a Tiger,' 'The Morning Call,' 'Two Can Play at That Game,' 'Trying it On,' 'My Aunt,' and 'Delicate Ground.'

"Have 'The Marble Heart' and 'Camille' been much played in Liverpool? My idea would be to have the Royal at so much a week, and work matters in my own way."

Fate willed that this scheme should only exist on paper. The management venture was a failure, and poor Sothern was compelled to write—

"I've had an awful season, . . . and this time I've had a sickener."

Of his experiences in these early days Sothern, with his keen sense of humour, had, of course, in after-life, many amusing stories to tell, of which the following is an example: An actor was playing the part of a prisoner in a dungeon, and, in order to make his escape, had concealed in his dress a file about eighteen inches long. He had filed off his handcuffs and shackles, and through his prison

bars, and had leapt on to the stage, when the king's carbineers made their appearance, and pointed their muskets at him, the business of the piece being that he was to be shot dead in full view of the audience. The word "Fire!" was given, and followed by half a dozen feeble and harmless "clicks," the property-man having forgotten to "load" the guns. Here was a dilemma! Without the death of the escaped prisoner the piece could not come to an end, and how was the unfortunate actor to commit the happy despatch? Quick as lightning an idea, which surely proved that he had real dramatic genius, came into his mind. With a quick movement he thrust the ponderous file in the direction of his throat, at the same instant performing a kind of conjuring trick, which caused it to disappear, and then melodramatically exclaimed, "My God! I have swallowed the file!" He then came down to the footlights, and, to the entire satisfaction of the audience, expired in great agony.

Another anecdote, in which the notorious blunders of stage firearms had once more a part, he told of himself. He was playing with one of

the famous tragedians of his day in that lugubrious but then popular drama, entitled, "Pauline; or, A Night of Terror," in which, it may be remembered, two men, resolved to fight to the death, confront each other in the last act over a table on which lie two pistols, the one loaded, the other empty and harmless. With their backs to the table the men select their weapons, then face each other, and shoot. Sothern was to take up the deadly instrument, and as he fired, the tragedian, with a splendid "back-fall," was to drop down, a corpse. Alas! alas! the pistols were equally innocent of anything that would cause a report, and Sothern in dismay saw the almost noiseless fall of the two triggers, followed by the tragedian still standing and staring at him in mute and hopeless dismay. In a moment Sothern became inspired, again presented the pistol, clicked the offending trigger, and, with all the force of a good pair of lungs, roared "BANG!" The effect was instantaneous. The tragedian fell as if he had been shot through every vital part of his body, and the curtain came down to deafening applause.

On another occasion, a young lady was playing, who, although a novice in acting, had a lovely voice of which she was proud, and always used on the stage, even though the occasion was inopportune. She had been engaged to play a part in a melodrama, and had made it a *sine qua non* that she should introduce a song, and accompany herself on the piano. The director of the theatre, being obliged to go away on business, gave instructions to the stage-manager that she was to do this wherever she thought best. She was playing the part of a persecuted maiden, pursued by brigands, when, in the midst of a highly-wrought dramatic scene, to the horror of every one on the stage and behind the scenes, she insisted upon a piano being discovered in the wilds of the forest. She dashed on with her hair streaming down her back, and after a strong declamatory speech expressive of the idea that she wished she were back amongst her early friends, she exclaimed, "Ah, I see that the brigands have left their piano in the woods, which reminds me of the song my brother taught me long ago." Whereupon, with marvellous

complaisance, she revolved upon the music-stool, and proceeded to sing, "Home, Sweet Home."

But I must, for the time being, abandon anecdote, and return to Sothern at Laura Keene's theatre. Here, on October 18, 1858, was produced for the first time the piece known as "Our American Cousin," by Tom Taylor. Much to his disgust, Sothern was cast for the subordinate character of *Lord Dundreary*, who was intended to be an old man, and who had only forty-seven lines to speak. At first he declined to play the part, but subsequently, on the condition that he should be permitted to re-write it on lines of his own, undertook it. Then he commenced putting into it everything he had seen that had struck him as wildly absurd. There was not, he used afterwards to declare, a single look, word, or act in *Lord Dundreary* that had not been suggested to him by people whom he had known since early boyhood. On the first night the part was by no means a success,—indeed, it was some two or three weeks before the public began to understand what an actor whose name had hitherto been identified with characters of a serious and even pathetic

type meant by this piece of mad eccentricity. But, once comprehended, *Lord Dundreary's* popularity was a thing assured, and very soon he made a not very interesting or brilliant play one of the greatest attractions that the American stage had ever known. Everything about the part—the famous make-up, the wig, the whiskers, and the eye-glass, the eccentric yet faultless costumes, the lisp and the stutter, the ingenious distortion of old aphorisms—were the outcome of Sothern's own original thought. Only one thing connected with the impersonation — the quaint little hop (that odd "impediment in the gait," which became as much part and parcel of his lordship as the impediment in his speech)— was the result of accident. At rehearsal one cold day, Sothern, who was ever of a restless disposition, was endeavouring to keep himself warm by hopping about at the back of the stage, when Miss Keene sarcastically inquired if "he was going to introduce that in *Dundreary?*" Among the bystanding actors and actresses this created a laugh, and Sothern, who at the time was out of temper with his part, replied in his gravest

manner, "Yes, Miss Keene; that's my view of the character." Having so far committed himself, he felt bound to go on with it, and finding as the rehearsal progressed that the whole company, including the scene-shifters, were convulsed with laughter, he at night made capital out of a modified hop. Months grew into years while *Lord Dundreary* reigned supreme upon the American stage, and English playgoers were almost wearying of waiting for this most original of stage creations, when it was modestly enough announced that on November 11, 1861, Mr. Sothern, "formerly of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, and from the principal American theatres," would make his first appearance at the Haymarket, in a character which he had already played for upwards of eight hundred times. In theatrical circles the experiment was, oddly enough, considered to be a most dangerous one, and it was only because the Haymarket was sadly in need of an attraction that Sothern got a chance of appearing on its historic boards. *Lord Dundreary*, it was said, had become popular in New York because the American theatre-goers of those

days revelled in a gross and insulting caricature of an English nobleman; in London the performance would, no doubt, be condemned as entirely wanting in humour, taste, and judgment. That Sothern himself was uncertain about it the following incident will prove: During the rehearsal of the play one of the oldest members of the Haymarket company came upon the stage while he was running over his famous letter scene. He turned, and said, "My dear madam, don't come on here till you get your cue. In fact, on the night of the performance, you will have twenty minutes to wait during this scene."

"Why," said the lady, satirically, "do you expect so much applause?"

"Yes," replied Sothern; "I know how long this scene always plays."

"Ah!" answered the actress, "but suppose the audience should not take your view of the matter?"

"In that case," said Sothern, "you won't have to bother yourself, for I and the piece will have been condemned a good hour before your services will be required."

Sothern's misgivings with regard to a venture upon which so much depended had been more openly expressed in a letter which, before leaving America, he wrote to a friend in England :—

"I have received a point-blank offer," he said, "from the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London, and, conditionally, have accepted, to open in October next. I commence as *Lord Dundreary*. Every one foretells a hit; *but I am doubtful.* The whole past seems like a dream to me. Who (when I first played *Beverley* as an amateur) ever imagined that I should take to the stage as a profession—come over to America, remain nine years, and return to 'star' in London!"

What a terrible "first-night" to the anxious actor that initial performance of "Our American Cousin" on the London stage must have been! All the actors and actresses of the Haymarket company, including Buckstone, who played *Asa Trenchard* (a part that never suited him), Chippendale, Rogers, Clark, Braid, Mrs. Charles Young, Miss M. Oliver, Miss H. Lindley, and Miss Henrade, predicted the certain failure of the piece and its principal performer; but Sothern attacked his

work boldly, and although the piece did not make an immediate success, the humour and originality of his acting were universally acknowledged.

It was, indeed, some time before "Our American Cousin" (which is, in truth, but a poor play) drew remunerative audiences, and, in despair of its ever doing so, Buckstone had actually put up notices announcing that it would be immediately replaced by "She Stoops to Conquer," when Charles Mathews, who had seen and well knew how to appreciate Sothern's admirable acting, strongly advised him to keep it in the bill, declaring that *Lord Dundreary* had only to become known to be phenomenally popular. How right in his judgment Mathews was the sequel proved. The fame of his lordship spread far and near; the success of the performance became as great as it was then unprecedented, and for four hundred consecutive nights the Haymarket was crowded with eager, delighted, and uproariously mirthful audiences. Well might Sothern in those days look back with pride to the perseverance and faith in himself that had upheld him through so many struggles and disappointments, and which had at

length given him the realization of his most sanguine hopes.

It may here be worth while to glance at the other London playhouses, and take note of the programmes with which "Our American Cousin" had to compete. At Drury Lane Miss Avonia Jones was playing in "Medea;" at the Adelphi the Boucicaults were to be seen in "The Colleen Bawn;" at the Princess's Fechter had just produced "Othello;" at the Lyceum Falconer's "Peep o' Day" was the attraction; at the Olympic the unrivalled Robson was acting to enthusiastic and enthralled audiences; at the St. James's Miss Herbert, Miss Kate Terry, and Mr. Alfred Wigan were appearing in "The Isle of St. Tropez;" at Sadler's Wells Mr. Phelps's artistic revival of "The Winter's Tale" was being given; and at the Strand "Johnnie" Clarke, "Jimmy" Rogers, and Marie Wilton, brightest and best trio of all burlesque performers, were making the little house ring with merriment in the travesty called "Esmeralda." A small number of theatres these, in comparison with the long list with which we are to-day familiar; but, surely, a goodly selection of

plays, and a notable group of performers, whose names the history of the stage will not allow to die? Above them all, however, Sothern rose pre-eminently, and for many months the Haymarket was the head centre of theatrical attraction.

It must have been very gratifying to the actor to find that *Lord Dundreary* was at once understood by English folk. There was no suggestion of bad taste; the impersonation, extravagant though it undoubtedly was, was not considered foolish; it excited laughter, it gained applause, it interested as much as it amused, and it became the rage not only of London but of England. *Dundreary* was upon the lips of every one. Men cultivated Dundreary whiskers and affected Dundreary coats;* indeed, at that time, Sothern was such a good friend to the tailors that, if he would have accepted them, he might have been furnished, without

* Mr. E. H. Sothern still possesses, and it need hardly be said, prizes, the long frock-coat which, on the occasion of the first performance of "Our American Cousin" in America, his father borrowed from Mr. Boucicault for the use of *Lord Dundreary*. The name of "Boucicault" is affixed to this, the original of a since world-famous garment.

any mention of payment, with clothes sufficient for a dozen lifetimes. His dressing-room at the Haymarket was crowded with parcels sent by energetic haberdashers, who knew that if by wearing it upon the stage he would set the fashion for a certain make of necktie, or a particular pattern of shirt-cuff, or collar, their fortunes would be half made; and hatters and bootmakers followed in the haberdashers' wake. Dundreary photographs were seen everywhere; "Dundreary-isms," as they came to be called, were the fashionable *mots* of the day; and little books (generally very badly done) dealing with the imaginary doings of *Dundreary* under every possible condition, and in every quarter of the globe, were in their thousands sold at the street corners. Concerning *Dundreary* quite three parts of England went more than half mad, and not to know all about him and his deliciously quaint sayings and doings was to argue yourself unknown.

The actor who not only caused but sustained all this excitement must have achieved something far greater than the mere creation of a

new type of "stage swell." *Dundreary* was a study for the philosopher, as well as a laughing-stock for the idler, and he thus became popular with all classes of the community. Summing him up in his tersely odd way, the American dramatic critic who signs himself "Nym Crinkle" said, "Mr. Sothern's conception of the part of *Dundreary*, if not an inspiration, shows inherent originality. The type itself is new. It is the elaboration of a negation. *Dundreary* is an intellectual nonentity. It is as if the actor had set about to show us the rich fulness of a vacuum. But even a negation becomes eloquent when all the faculties of the artist are directed upon it. And histrionism here shares the victory of philosophy, which spends centuries of learning to prove that nothing IS. Heretofore the stage has not been destitute of amusing asses. Asininity, in fact, always played a prominent part in comedy. But when did we ever see a player devote himself to the elucidation of its mysteries with this exhaustive skill and patience? At best the fool was portrayed by empty fooling, no one seeming to think it a serious matter to

be brainless; and how acceptable the mere physical exposition of stupidity was to the public the serene idiot in 'Humpty Dumpty' fully demonstrated, by grinning vacuously at them for two years. But Mr. Sothern conceived the idea of an elegant ass, perfect in all his imperfections, rich in the absence of brains, coherent in his incoherency, and polished in the proof of his stupidity. More than this, he undertook to show us the internal character of it; the very workings of the addled intellect; and it was possible to put our finger with accuracy on the weak spots in his head whenever we got through laughing. *Dundreary* lacks the logical faculty, and in the showing humour steps in gracefully. When he reads his brother *Sam's* letter, which informs him that *Sam* has discovered that his old nurse is his mother, *Dundreary* brings all his faculties to bear upon his own interest in the matter, and tries to discover who *his* mother will be if this is true. But he cannot make a deduction. Any effort of his mind to be sequential involves him in inextricable confusion. He uses his fingers as aids. His thumb represents *Sam's*

mother; his forefinger is his own mother; and then he catches sight of the remaining fingers, and away go his faculties. Whose mothers are they? This is foolishness, but rational foolishness, after all, because we see the spring of it. There is also this significance in *Dundreary*—that he represents the possibility of a state of society in which nothing is preserved to the individual but personal vanity of appearance. The satire is doubtless overdrawn, but it anticipates the fashionable man whose artificial tastes have eaten up his natural faculties. Mr. Sothern's success is not flattering to the few comedians who have endeavoured to show by direct means how estimable frankness and common sense are—for he has better shown it by his antithesis, and his delicious dolt has seasoned for long keeping a very trashy play. Above all, he shows the true comedy talent—the power of getting inside a character, and making it talk and act according to its nature."

After this I may appropriately quote an English critic's judgment on the first appearance of *Lord Dundreary* at the Haymarket. "Whether,"

said the *Athenæum* of November 16, 1861, "the character by itself would sustain any degree of interest, we much doubt; but in the hands of Mr. Sothern, the gentleman who has been acting in it for so many hundred nights over the water, it is certainly the funniest thing in the world. The part is abstractedly a vile caricature of an inane nobleman, intensely ignorant and extremely indolent. The notion once accepted by the audience that such an absurd animal could be the type of any class whatever, the actor was free to exaggerate to any extent the representation of the ridiculous. Mr. Sothern, in the quietest way, takes full advantage of his position, and effectually subdues the audience to his mood. Laughter, at all times irrepressible, finally culminates in a general convulsion, which to our ears seemed quite a peculiarity—it was so strange, and yet so natural. The occasion was simply the reading of a letter from a brother in America, containing literally nothing more than he feared a former letter had miscarried from his having forgotten to direct it. This, with certain inane comments on its contents, sufficed to enable Mr. Sothern to

produce the prodigious effect we have indicated. We are therefore disposed to believe that Mr. Sothern, as an eccentric actor, is a man of no ordinary genius, and reasonably desire his further acquaintance."

Nothing pleased Sothern better than to meet with people who did not look upon *Dundreary* as an absolute fool. His lordship was, it will be remembered, remarkably shrewd in all matters that were likely to affect his pocket; he had no idea of being in any way or by any one taken in; and even his twisting about of familiar proverbs, ridiculous as it was, had in it a certain amount of naïve common sense. On that point Sothern said—

"Now, see how easily this thought, which has been frequently cavilled at as too nonsensical for an educated man, was suggested. A number of us were, years ago, taking supper in Halifax after a performance, when a man entered the room, and, looking at us, said, 'Oh, I see! Birds of a feather!' I instantly saw the weak side of this fragment of a well-known maxim, and winking at my brother actors, and assuming

utter ignorance, I said, 'What do you mean by birds of a feather'? He looked rather staggered, and replied, 'What, have you never heard of the old English proverb—"Birds of a feather flock together"?' Every one shook his head. He then said, 'I never met such a lot of ignoramuses in my life.' That was my cue, and I began to turn the proverb inside out. I said to him, 'There never could have been such a proverb—birds of *a* feather! The idea of a whole flock of birds having only one feather! The thing is utterly ridiculous. Besides, the poor bird that had that feather must have flown on one side; consequently, as the other birds couldn't fly at all, they couldn't flock together. But even accepting the absurdity, if they flocked at all they must flock together, as no bird could possibly be such a d—d fool as to go into a corner and try and flock by himself.' Our visitor began to see the force of the logic, and was greeted with roars of laughter. I made a memorandum of the incident, and years afterwards elaborated the idea in writing *Dundreary*. I have quires upon quires of memoranda of a similar character; but when-

ever I play the part the public seem so disappointed at not hearing the old lines, that I fear I shall never have the opportunity of getting them to accept what would really be a much better version."

Even as it was, "Our American Cousin" bristled with deliciously quaint "Dundrearyisms," as, take, for example, his lordship's remark when *Asa Trenchard* asked him if he had "got any brains?" "He wants to find out if I've got any brains, and then he'll scalp me; that's the idea!" Or again, when *Dundreary*, after copious potations of brandy-and-soda, is alone in his bedroom and says, "Everything seems wobbling about. I know as well as possible there are only two candles there, and yet I can't help seeing four. I wonder, if I was to put those two fellows out, *what would become of the other two?*" And then, when *Asa* comes in and suggests they shall "have the liquors up and make a night of it," *Dundreary* replies, "*Make* a night of it? Why, it *is* night! It's just twelve o'clock."

In the scene which he has with his valet *Buddicombe*, after the latter's dismissal, *Dundreary*

shows a keen sense of humour. *Buddicombe* has asked for a character, when the following conversation takes place :—

Dun. I'll tell you the best plan. You write your own character, and I'll put my name to it. It will save us both a good deal of anxiety.

Bud. Thank you, my lord. That will suit me exactly. Oh, my lord, I have to thank you for the two waistcoats you were kind enough to give me, but unfortunately they are too small for me.

Dun. Well, give them to your mother.

Bud. Oh, I took the liberty of putting them back into your lordship's wardrobe.

Dun. I don't want to carry on a conversation all day. Go away. You're a nice person, but I've had enough of you.

Bud. Yes, my lord. I put the waistcoats back, and I took instead two coats.

Dun. This is getting funny! Oh! You've taken a couple of coats, have you?

Bud. Yes, my lord. I thought you wouldn't mind the exchange.

Dun. Oh no, I rather like it! New ones, I hope.

Bud. I can't say they're quite new, my lord, because I've worn one and my brother has worn the other.

Dun. Hadn't you better let your uncle have one?

Bud. That's very curious, my lord. He's *had* one!

Dun. Oh! I'm glad you've made the old man happy! Have you taken many trousers?

Bud. Not yet, my lord.

Dun. Oh, not yet! Will you be kind enough to look them over, and if they don't fit we'll have them altered for you.

Bud. Really, my lord, this is more than I expected.

Dun. It's a great deal more than *I* expected. Will you have the goodness to fetch me a policeman?

Bud. Yes, my lord. Will one be sufficient?

Dun. What a splendid fool this fellow is! Oh, you can bring me one and a quarter if you like!

From the scenes between *Dundreary* and *Georgina* one may almost quote at random :—

Dun. It's a pretty flower,—if it were another colour. One fellow likes one colour, and another fellow likes another colour. Come, you know what I mean? (GEORGINA *shakes her head.*) Yes, you do. I don't—but you do. I mean it's one of those things that grows out of a flower-pot,—roots,—mud,—and all that sort of thing. Oh, talking of mud reminds me I want to say something. It's rather awkward for one fellow to say to another fellow,—the fact is, I've made up my mind to propose to some fellow or other, and it struck me I might as well propose to you as anybody else. (GEORGINA *turns slightly away from him.*) I mean sooner, of course. I only said that because I was nervous,—any fellow naturally does feel nervous when he knows he's going to make an ass of himself. Talking about asses, I've been a bachelor ever since I've been so high, and I've got rather tired of that sort of thing, and it struck me if you'll be kind enough to marry me I shall be very much obliged to you. Of course, if you don't see the matter in the same light, and fancy you'd rather not,—why, I don't care a rap about it! (*She turns aside, looking amazed.*) I've got it all mixed up somehow or other. You see, the fact is,—hem—hem! (*Pause.*) It makes a fellow feel awkward when he's talking to the back of a person's head. (*She faces him.*) Thank you, that's better: you'll find me a very nice fellow,—at least, I think so,—that is, what I mean is, that most fellows think me a nice

fellow,—two fellows out of three would think me a nice fellow,—and the other fellow—the third fellow,—well, that fellow would be an ass. I'm very good-tempered, too; that's a great point, isn't it? You look as if you'd got a good temper; but then, of course, we know that many a girl looks as if she'd got a good temper before she's married,—but after she's married sometimes a fellow finds out her temper's not exactly what he fancied. (*He laughs suddenly.*) I'm making a devil of a mess of it! I really think we should be very happy. I'm a very domesticated fellow,—fond of tea,—smoking in bed,—and all that sort of thing. I merely name that because it gives you an insight into a fellow's character. You'll find me a very easy fellow to get along with, and after we've been married two or three weeks, if you don't like me you can go back again to your mother.

Those who remember the play will readily recall the delightful exactitude with which each point in this extraordinary "proposal" speech was made. Those who do not will, perhaps, hardly appreciate it, for one cannot on paper convey the comical stutter, the quaint laugh, and the wonderful facial expression of the actor; but they will probably see in it signs of the curious subtlety of the character that Sothern invented.

Later on, in the scene in which *Lieutenant Vernon* asks *Dundreary* to use his influence to get him appointed to a captaincy, there occurs a delicious "Dundrearyism":—

Dun. I suppose you are all right in your lee scuppers ?

Lieut. Lee scuppers ?

Dun. Your mainbrace, larboard stove pipes, hatchway, helm-rudder, and all that sort of thing ?

Lieut. Oh,—you mean,—can I pass my examination ?

Dun. I don't mean anything of the sort. Of course you can pass it. *The point is, can you get through it ?*

The joke of the dog wagging his tail because of his superior strength, and in order to prevent the tail wagging the dog, has become such a by-word that it need not be detailed here—though it is sometimes, I fancy, forgotten that its originator was *Dundreary*.

The letter from *Sam* (the immortal *Sam* who never had a "uel"), which used to be the great success of the evening, and which, delivered as it was, used to make people absolutely sore with laughing, must be given, with the stage directions, *in extenso* :—

(*Before opening letter read* "N.B." *outside it.*) "N.B.—If you don't get this letter, write and let me know." That fella's an ass, whoever he is !

(*Opens letter, taking care he holds it upside down.*) *I* don't know any fella in America except Sam; of course I know Sam, because Sam's my brother. Every fella knows his own brother. Sam and I used to be boys when we were lads, both of us. We were always together. People used to say, "Birds of a feather"—what is it birds of a feather do ?—oh,

"Birds of a feather gather no moss!" That's ridiculous, that is. The idea of a lot of birds picking up moss! Oh no; it's the early bird that knows its own father. That's worse than the other. No bird can know its own father. If he told the truth, he'd say he was even in a fog about his own mother. *I've* got it—it's the wise child that gets the worms! Oh, that's worse than any of them! No parent would allow his child to get a lot of worms like that! Besides, the whole proverb's nonsense from beginning to end. Birds of *a* feather flock together: yes, that's it! As if a whole flock of birds would have only one feather! They'd all catch cold. Besides, there's only one of those birds could have that feather, and that fella would fly all on one side! That's one of those things no fella can find out. Besides, fancy any bird being such a d—d fool as to go into a corner and flock all by himself! Ah, that's one of those things no fella can find out. (*Looks at letter.*) Whoever it's from he's written it upside down. Oh no, I've got it upside down! I knew some fella was upside down. (*Laughs.*) Yes, this is from Sam; I always know Sam's handwriting when I see his name on the other side. "America." Well, I'm glad he's sent me his address! "My dear brother." Sam always calls me brother, because neither of us have got any sisters.

"I am afraid that my last letter miscarried, as I was in such a hurry for the post that I forgot to put any direction on the envelope." Then I suppose that's the reason I never got it; but who could have got it? The only fella that could have got that letter is some fella without a name. And how on earth could he get it? The postman couldn't go about asking every fella he met if he'd got no name!

Sam's an ass! "I find out now" (I wonder what he's found out now?) "that I was changed at my birth." Now, what d—d nonsense that is! Why didn't he find it out before? "My old nurse turns out to be my mother." What

rubbish! Then, if that's true, all I can say is, Sam's not my brother, and if he's not my brother, who the devil am I? Let's see now. Stop a minute (*pointing to forefinger of left hand*). That's Sam's mother, and that's (*the thumb*) Sam's nurse. Sam's nurse is only half the size of his mother. Well, that's *my* mother (*points to second finger on left hand He finds he can't get that finger to stand up like the rest—the thumb and forefinger—as he closes the third and little finger*). I can't get my mother to stand up. Well, that's my mother (*holds up forefinger of right hand; in the meantime he has opened* all *the fingers of the left hand*). Hullo, here's a lot of other fella's mothers! Well, as near as I can make out, Sam has left me no mother at all! Then the point is, who's my father? Oh, that's a thing no fella can find out!

Oh, here's a P.S. "By the bye, what do you think of the following riddle? If fourteen dogs with three legs each catch forty-eight rabbits with seventy-six legs in twenty-five minutes, how many legs must twenty-four rabbits have to get away from ninety-three dogs with two legs each in half an hour?"

Here's another P.S. "You will be glad to know that I have purchased a large estate, somewhere or other on the banks of the Mississippi. Send me the purchase money. The enclosed pill-box contains a sample of the soil!"

Though in all the public announcements of "Our American Cousin" the play was stated to be the sole work of Tom Taylor, in a manuscript copy of it which is now before me, it is clearly set down that "the character of *Lord Dundreary*" was "written and created by Mr. Sothern." In the handwriting of the actor this

book is full of instructions which show that, easily as he always acted, he was ever anxious concerning the proper "making of his points," and the improvement of the play. In the scene between *Dundreary* and his valet from which I have quoted, he says, "Warn *Buddicombe* to play well down the stage, to speak very clearly, and wait till every laugh is followed by a dead silence." Of one of the *Georgina* scenes he notes, "Every line of this scene is a roar, but it is not long enough;" and of an encounter with *Asa*, albeit it was his own work, he remarks, "This scene is as bad as it can be." Before the famous reading of the letter, he enjoins, "Extreme silence during Mr. Sothern's scene," and after it he admits, "Once my letter is read, the rest of the piece sinks down."

Sothern was incessantly at work altering, cutting, adding to, and elaborating his parts. His son, Mr. E. H. Sothern, has entrusted me with another and later copy of "Our American Cousin," which is full of notes, and which is, in his opinion, the most interesting of the copies that exist. Here we find a note to the effect that

the actors who are performing in the piece are to be warned that "no eyeglass or side whiskers are to be worn" (the reason for this is obvious), and that "the people are to play quick until the entrance of *Dundreary*." "Every one in evening dress; gentlemen do *not* wear gloves," is the heading in Sothern's handwriting to the first act. This was the prompt copy used on English and American provincial tours, and no doubt the faultlessly-dressed *Dundreary* had on more than one occasion been shocked at the solecisms of the country actors cast for *Sir Edward Trenchard*, and *Captain de Boots*. Such an instruction as this would not be taken amiss. "*Not* to wear gloves" would not be expensive. It is when an exacting star expects the poorly paid actor who supports him to dress up to his standard that anxiety comes in. Sothern, in his own handwriting, gives the following wild letter from young *Edward Trenchard* (it was he, it will be remembered, who introduces *Cousin Asa* to his English relatives) to his father: "I am delighted with America—and the Americans. It is a grand country. I've travelled everywhere; I've shot

alligators in the South; killed buffalo in the West; been hunting in Minnesota with a party of Crows six feet high; and am now resting in this lovely place, enjoying the pure air, and whipping the trout streams of Vermont." Then follows a scene by Sothern, in which, in a far shorter time than Tom Taylor took about it, the story of the *Mary Meredith* relationship with the *Trenchards* is told, and the expected arrival of *Asa* is discussed. In this connection the cautious Sothern, evidently with an eye on provincial American audiences, makes *Florence Trenchard* say, "Stop! I won't hear another word against him! The Americans are a brave and earnest people, and it is absurd to suppose that they all speak through their noses, perpetually drink chain-lightning, or slap everybody on the back and call you 'Old Hoss!'" To which *Sir Edward* replies, "Why, what American novels have you been reading, Florry? You're quite enthusiastic!" and the daughter discreetly answers, "Nay, papa dear; I'm merely just." A little later on, *Dundreary*, pointing to the outrageously dressed *Asa*, says to *Mrs. Mount-*

chessington, "Is that the American?" and when she answers "Yes," he asks, "What made him come in disguise? Sam says they've got nothing but blankets and rings through their noses." So Sothern's consummate tact showed him how to round off corners that might, under certain conditions, prove troublesome.

In the second act of this copy there is another scene between *Dundreary* and his valet. *Buddicombe* is brushing his master's hair while the latter lazily looks through the advertisements in a newspaper, and the following ridiculous conversation takes place:—

Dun. (*reading*). "WANTED.—A baby to bring up in a bottle——"

Bud. Oh! *by* the bottle, my lord——

Dun. Buy it? What, with the baby in it? Nonsense! I don't want any bottled babies.

Dun. (*reading*). "TEETH.—Teeth taken out with pleasure and comfort, by the aid of laughing gas." Buddicombe, *you* must have some laughing gas.

Bud. But I don't require any, my lord.

Dun. Well, but you must have it, for me to see the operation

Bud. My teeth are all sound, my lord; and I've got thirty-two.

Dun. Then you've got too many; no fellow wants thirty-two teeth—they're only in the way. Three or four are quite

enough for a fellow like you. (*Reading*) "WANTED.—Wanted at school—two thrashing machines."

Bud. At *school?* No, no, my lord. Wanted at Scole. *Scole* is a small town in Norfolk.

Dun. I'm not an ass. I know that! Have you ever been to Scole—I mean school?

Bud. Yes, my lord, certainly.

Dun. Any thrashing going on while you were there?

Bud. I received nothing but *good marks*, my lord.

Dun. Have you got any of them now?

Bud. I have prizes, my lord. I was top boy in my school.

Dun. It must have been a jolly old school, then. Oh! (*reading*) listen to these fellows! They ought to be in a lunatic asylum! "WANTED: SHOOTING!—Two gentlemen require shooting every day for a month." What d'ye think of those fellows? Buddicombe, I'll lend you a gun, and you can have a pop at those fellows all next week.

Bud. I'm afraid that sort of sport wouldn't suit the gentlemen.

Dun. Never mind, it might please *you!*

Bud. If I did such a thing, my lord, I should be hanged.

Dun. Do you think you would? Well, then—do it.

And so on *ad lib.*

In the third act, *Buddicombe* is warned that in his scenes with *Dundreary* he should "speak *slowly*, very clearly, and wait until every titter is over before he begins his speeches. His dress is frock-coat, white vest, dark trousers, high white collar, and dark necktie. Hat, and *no gloves.*" This

glove question was evidently in some places a troublesome one.

The long, rambling, incoherent story that *Dundreary* tells to *Georgina*, and which was always being altered, is here written in as follows:—

"When Sam was a lad he was merely a baby —born, and everything like that, of course. He had a bald head too, and was greatly annoyed about it,—I don't mean annoyed about being bald, but about being born at all. What I mean is,— he put it this way,—there he was, and of course it was too late to alter the position. There was another fellow,—an old chum of Sam's,—and he was born too,—and he had a bald head too. There was a good deal of jealousy about that. This fellow was a baby about Sam's age. There was a good deal of bother about that. His mother asked my opinion about it, but I told her I didn't want to get mixed up in family matters. Well, that fellow died, and made himself very comfortable in that sort of way,—and his cousin by another fellow's godmother married a girl that I was going to marry,—only I didn't get up, or some-

thing like that,—my man didn't call me,—or something of that sort,—so she married this other fellow,—a very nice fellow he was, and I wanted to do him a good turn, and there it was. They were very happy and all that,—splendid mother-in-law and a large family,—about fourteen children,—made things very pleasant like that,—nearly all of them twins,—and they made me godfather to about a dozen of them. The wife was a very nice woman, with her nose a little on one side,—a lovely girl though. *His* nose was a little on one side, too, so it made everything pleasant like that. All the children's noses were on one side too. They were what you might call south-south-west noses. Fourteen noses looked very pleasant like that. Whenever I met them in the park it always struck me that if my fool of a man had only called me that morning, and I had married their mother,—I mean, if I'd been their father,—it was quite on the cards that their noses might have been a little—— But that's nothing to do with the anecdote. Well, one day he went a stroll with his mother-in-law,—a woman he hated like poison,—and they got shipwrecked,

—had a very jolly time of it,—lived on a raft for about a fortnight,—lived on anything they could pick up,—oysters, sardines,—I don't exactly know what,—until at last they had to eat each other. They used to toss up who they should eat first, —and he was a very lucky fellow; and when he was left alone with his mother-in-law, he tied her to the raft,—legs dangling in the water, and everything pleasant like that. Then he stuck a penknife in his mother-in-law, and cut her up in slices, and ate her. He told me that he enjoyed the old woman very much. He was a splendid fellow,—full of humour,—and full of mother-in-law, too."

Of course, without the inimitable manner in which Sothern used to give utterance to it, this whimsical balderdash loses almost all its point; but I hope that with me most of my readers will be able to recall this marvellously subtle and perfect impersonation. Not many, I think, will agree with the intelligent playgoer, who, having sat through a performance of "Our American Cousin," left the theatre saying that "*Lord Dundreary* was the worst played part in the

piece, because the actor had such an unfortunate impediment in his speech."

In the first copy of Tom Taylor's play of which I have made mention, there is a note by Sothern to the effect that a scene between *Dundreary* and *Asa*, at the end of the third act, is "as bad as bad can be." In the one of which I am now writing it is replaced by the following, in Sothern's own handwriting—

Asa. How do you do, my lord?

Dun. Can't you see, I'm not doing anything.

Asa. Nice place this. I suppose you own lots of farms like this—eh?

Dun. Well, I suppose I do.

Asa. Do they raise much on this one?

Dun. Yes—sometimes.

Asa. What?

Dun. Money.

Asa. Yes,—but do you raise wheat, and oats, and potatoes?

Dun. No, I don't; but my tenants do.

Asa. Of course you raise pigs?

Dun. Raise pigs? No. When I want exercise I raise dumb-bells. (*Aside*) This fellow's an idiot!

Asa. Look here, now. I want information. What do you feed your pigs on?

Dun. On the ground, of course! Do you suppose I feed them up in a balloon?

Asa. No, no; I mean, what do you give them to eat?

Dun. Grass, and corn, and sardines,—anything they fancy. I don't care what they eat.

Asa. When you give them corn, do you use it in the ear?

Dun. Do I do what?

Asa. Give it them in the ear?

Dun. In their ears? The fellow's mad! What have the animals got mouths for if they're going to have their food rammed down their ears?

Asa. Blessed if I know if this fellow's a fool, or whether he's selling me.

And much more to the same purpose, until such as in those days remained of the serious interest of the piece was resumed.

In the fourth act there is little of interest, save an appeal to the company to "pay all their attention to the tag at the end of the piece," and a note near the conclusion of the reading of the famous *Sam's* letter to the effect that "*Sir Edward* and *Florence* must be ready to come on, *in case Dundreary* doesn't read P.SS." Which shows that encores may be missed, even in the best regulated of pieces.

And so, through infinite painstaking, *Dundreary* became the established theatrical hero of the day. Every saying and every action of the apparently semi-idiotic creature was the result

of careful observation and study; even the preposterous counting of the fingers was a transcript from what had been seen. "You remember," said Sothern, "that in one act I have a by-play on my fingers, in which I count from one to ten, and then, reversing, begin with the right thumb and count ten, nine, eight, seven, six, and five are eleven. This has frequently been denounced by critics as utterly out of place in the character, but I took the incident from actual life, having seen a notoriously clever man on the English turf, as quick as lightning in calculating odds, completely puzzled by this ridiculous problem."

How "Our American Cousin" was revived, and re-revived on the Haymarket boards, and how, even when he was attracting large audiences with other plays, Sothern found it expedient to appear in little after-pieces in which *Dundreary* figured, is a matter of stage history. One of these farces (it was the joint work of Sothern and H. J. Byron, and in it all Tom Taylor's characters were absurdly burlesqued) was entitled, "Dundreary Married and Settled," and in connection with it an extraordinary but true story of a young man

who had mistaken his vocation is on record. "I was playing," said Sothern, "at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, in 'Dundreary Married and Settled.' Among the company was a young fellow who, although undeniably well-educated and a thorough gentleman, had been obviously and expressly made *not* to be an actor. He had ruined two or three scenes with me in pieces which we had previously performed, and I was forced to tell the stage manager particularly not to let him play *Lieutenant Vernon*. The manager, however, begged me to give the young fellow another chance, and I consented, at the same time remarking, 'You'll find there will be another *contre-temps*, and the mischief to pay.' The lines he had to utter, when I gave him a certain cue, were as follows: 'That's a nice horse to lend a friend; I never could ride. I have broken both his knees. Where is Georgina? Upstairs? Heave ahead!' You can imagine the consternation of us all when, the time having arrived for him to 'go on,' he paid not the slightest attention to the cue, but listened intently at the keyhole, apparently absorbed in his own meditations, and softly whistling to him-

self, 'Still so Gently O'er Me Stealing.' What to do I did not know. I shrugged my shoulders and looked despairingly at the prompter, for there was a dead pause in the play, which was, to say the least of it, embarrassing. The prompter, a quick-tempered man, rushed round to the door, and you can imagine my feelings as the young fellow in an instant afterwards came half leaping, half falling on the stage, as frightened and amazed as if he had been shot out of a catapult. The prompter could not resist the temptation of an inviting attitude, and as *Lieutenant Vernon* stood bending over the keyhole, he received the full force of a heavy boot that greatly accelerated his motion. With a howl of agony, the young amateur exclaimed, 'My God! What's that?' Not knowing the cause of this demonstration, I whispered to him, 'Come on, sir; come on! Quick!' Poor fellow, he had 'come on' with a vengeance; and this is what, in the confusion of the moment, he said: 'That's a nice girl to lend a friend: I never could ride. I have broken both her knees! Where is the horse? Upstairs? Heave ahead!' That is one of the few times in

my experience when I felt as if I had been shaken up by an earthquake."

Another of these "wild whimsicalities," as Sothern called them, was entitled "Dundreary a Father." The one was as ephemeral as the other, and, amusing as both were, neither added much to the fame of Sothern or the popularity of *Dundreary*.

In due course *Dundreary* tried his fortune in Paris, but there he did not make a success. French audiences failed to see the humour of the creation, and his lordship was slightingly alluded to by critics as "*un sort de snob*." It is interesting, however, to note that Henry Irving, Edward Saker, and John T. Raymond were members of the company. Irving played the drunken lawyer's clerk, *Abel Murcott*, and, in connection with the luckless engagement, Raymond, who was the *Asa Trenchard*, has recorded a couple of good stories that prove that the failure of his venture by no means damped Sothern's elastic spirits. These stories should, perhaps, have their place in another chapter, but as they deal with *Dundreary* in Paris, they shall be told here.

"You are, perhaps, aware," wrote the popular American comedian, "that at the subsidy theatres in France, no fire, not even a lighted match, is permitted on the stage. You will also recall the fact that in one part of the play *Asa Trenchard* has to burn a will. In order to comply with the law, and at the same time get rid of this document, I was compelled to tear the will instead of applying the match in the usual way. The result was that the part was not at all a success, much of its point being lost by the tameness of this incident. At last I said to Sothern, 'I have a great mind to burn the thing, anyhow, and take the chances.' My misfortune was in confiding my intention to Sothern, for he instantly gave instructions to one of the *gendarmes* who was hovering about the wings to arrest me in the act. When the scene came on, anticipating no trouble, but expecting, on the contrary, to receive a recall, as I always did at this juncture, I struck the match and lighted the paper. Before I knew anything else I was seized from behind by a big *gendarme* and carried bodily off the stage. Of course the audience did not know what was

the matter, and I was equally in the dark. Not speaking French, I could not make any explanation, or ask any questions, and the more I struggled the tighter the *gendarme* held me in his grip. It was only when Mr. Sefton, the agent of Sothern, made his appearance and explained matters that I was released. You should have seen then how that French official, mad as a hornet at being imposed upon, went for Sothern, and the manner in which he disappeared down the back-stairs into a convenient hiding-place. Fortunately, Mr. Sefton was able to appease the indignation of the irate Frenchman, and in a few minutes *Dundreary* was permitted to come out of his retirement, and the play went on happily.

"During this engagement," continued Raymond, "we had a frightful fight one night, and produced a perfect scare among the members of the company. ——, the celebrated bill-poster of Paris and London, was in the green-room, and made some remark as coming from Sothern concerning me which I purposely construed into a most grievous insult. Dashing impetuously into Sothern's dressing-room, which was just off

the green-room, I demanded in a loud tone, that could be heard by everybody, instant satisfaction or his life, whispering to Sothern to keep up the joke. Always as quick as lightning to take a hint, he presently emerged, kicking me out of his apartment into the midst of the now thoroughly aroused people in the green-room. I rushed off to get a knife, swearing vengeance. Everybody appealed to me to be quiet, and tried to hold me back, while I contended that nothing but his life's blood would wipe out the insult. Of course the play had to continue, but the actors were almost afraid to go on the stage, looking on me as a wild American, who, with bowie-knife in hand, was about to commit a horrible murder. Meanwhile Sothern had quietly sent me a note telling me to slip into his dressing-room again, get some 'stage blood' there, lock the door, and that as soon as he came off we would have a 'time.' I followed the instructions, and after the act he came down and joined me. The people in the green-room were on the alert, and between Sothern and myself we gave their listening ears the benefit of a full chorus of moans, groans, imprecations,

struggles, and other sounds of distress, among which every now and then my knife could be heard sticking into some conveniently soft substance that sounded very like a human body. ——, whose remarks had been the cause of all this commotion, frightened almost to death, rushed after the *gendarmes*. When the latter came they demanded entrance in French. A low groan was the only response. Believing that one or both of us must be nearly dead, they burst open the door. —— was the first man to rush in, and was followed by the officials and such of the company as were not on the stage. You can imagine their feelings when they saw Sothern and myself, covered with blood, lying upon the floor, with the gory knife near by, the entire apartment in confusion and bearing evidence of a desperate struggle.

"'Poor little!' said one, 'does his pulse beat?' 'He must be dying!' was the remark of another. 'Go for a stretcher.' 'What awful fighters these Americans are!' and other similar expressions were also to be heard.

"——, with a horror-stricken face, stooped

over and touched Sothern, who partially raised his head, and feebly whispered, 'A glass of champagne — quick!' This was immediately given him, and then I lifted my head, and in a faint kind of way ejaculated, 'Some wine, too!' Then we both rose up on our elbows and asked for more wine, and from that position to our feet, until finally, with a hearty laugh at the success of our joke, we invited the whole party to join us in a potation. The practical *gendarmes* did not see any fun in being 'sold' in this manner, although they took their share of the champagne, and I think that some of the English actors themselves never, to this day, have learned to appreciate the pranks of the two 'Americans.'"

In England—both in London and in the country—the popularity of *Lord Dundreary* seemed to be inexhaustible, and, notwithstanding the great successes that Sothern made in other pieces, "Our American Cousin" was constantly reproduced at the Haymarket, and in America, I believe, never lost its charm. Concerning one of the London revivals, the *Times* said—

"There are some persons who enjoy, if not

a perpetual, at least a remarkable youth. Such persons reappear among their friends after a few years' absence, and everybody is astonished to find how young they are looking, in impudent defiance of the parish registry of births. To the category of people thus privileged, that distinguished noble, *Lord Dundreary*, having attained in London the enormous age of nearly nine theatrical years" (it will be seen that this was one of the *early* revivals), "and thus aged himself into a tradition, unquestionably belongs. On the 11th of November, 1861, he made his first bow to the British public; he floated gaily through the 'exhibition year' as one of the lions of that populous period, and here he is, in 1870, looking as fresh as ever, drawing crowds to the Haymarket with as much attractive force as the newest novelty could command.

"The fact must be taken into consideration that everything is new to those who have not seen it, and that to the travelling cockney who surveys the world from a subjective standpoint, the pyramids of Egypt are infinitely more modern than the Monument on Fish-street Hill. As there

came a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, so there has sprung up a race to whom *Lord Dundreary* is a figure of the past. The descendants of Joseph certainly derived no immediately perceptible benefit from the ignorance of the new Pharaoh; but it might have been otherwise if Joseph himself had lived on, and Mr. Sothern enjoys the advantage of being the Joseph alike of the past and the present.

"Be it remarked, however, that *Lord Dundreary*, although a pronounced aristocrat, is by no means an obstinate Conservative. He moves with the times, and, while he aims to please those who never saw him before, he laudably and successfully endeavours to retain his popularity with those to whom he has been long familiar. He drops many of his old jokes, and he introduces fresh pleasantries, verbal and practical, at pleasure, so that his oldest acquaintance behold and hear him doing and saying new things. Those who patronized him in 1861 did not then hear him sing the lyrical panegyric of his *Brother Sam* which now brings his first act to a mirthful conclusion, nor were they then made acquainted

with the somewhat pantomimic humour of the bedroom scene. The letter from the absent brother, of course, keeps its place as a *pièce de résistance*, and is nightly encored some four or five times. For this freedom of interpolation and omission Mr. Sothern derives full scope from the utter badness of the piece which he illumines, 'bright as a star when only one is shining in the sky.' The character of *Lord Dundreary*, though its details judiciously vary, holds its own as a unique creation."

With Sothern this quaintly conceived and marvellously elaborated conception died. It is true that his clever and handsome son—poor Lytton Sothern—whose early death still leaves an unhealed sore in the memories of those who knew and cared for him, played the part with some degree of success; but though the imitation was almost exact, an indescribable "something" was wanting, and one could not but feel that a "claimant" had arisen for a title that was extinct.

Those early Haymarket days must have been a wonderful change to the still young actor, who, in English provincial towns and in America, had

fought so hard a fight. From the overworked member of the stock company, with any number of parts to study, and innumerable slights to submit to, to suddenly become the leading light of successive London seasons, with only one character to delineate, would have turned the head of many an actor; but Sothern had the true stuff in him, and long before the phenomenal popularity of *Dundreary* showed the least sign of waning he was busy with other parts. The second character in which he appeared on the London stage was in a little piece which he had himself adapted from the French, and which he called "My Aunt's Advice;" and this was followed by his clever impersonation of *Captain Walter Maydenblush* in "The Little Treasure" (an event made memorable in the annals of the English stage, inasmuch as it is associated with one of the earliest successes of Miss Ellen Terry, who was the fascinating little *Gertrude* of those days), and a species of monologue entertainment entitled "Bunkum Muller." In all of these he was good, and the production of the little pieces enabled critics to see that he was not merely a one-part

player; but they were only passing efforts which served to keep his hand in while the drawing powers of "Our American Cousin" were at their height. The question of a successor to that play was a subject for the most anxious deliberation. Sothern, himself, was most anxious to appear in a piece of a serious type (to the end of his days he never forgot his success—I believe that it was the one of which he was most proud—in "La Dame aux Camélias"), but his English friends advised him that for the present he could only be accepted as a "character" actor, and it was not until Tom Robertson appeared with his delightful version of "Sullivan," entitled "David Garrick," that a sort of compromise was effected. Sothern expected to make an enormous success out of the opportunities for earnest acting that the first and third acts afforded, and his well-wishers felt certain that he would do wonders with the subsequently world-famous scene of simulated intoxication.

The history of this pleasant comedy, which still holds the stage, and out of which so much money has been made, is a curious one. Robertson's original adaptation was, according to Sothern's

own account of it, a very rough one, and it was sold to a dramatic publisher for the modest sum of £10. No one feeling disposed to produce it, it was for a period of eight years "pigeon-holed," and it was through a chance conversation with the adapter,—and subsequently most brilliant of modern-day English dramatists,—that Sothern heard of the plot, took a fancy to it, and decided that *Garrick* should be the successor of *Dundreary*. Prior to its London production, the play was tentatively performed at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham; and after it was over, Sothern, who was most keenly anxious about his new part, and never satisfied with his own acting, emphatically declared that the whole thing was a failure, and, as far as he was concerned, would never be heard of again. Luckily, his own judgment was overruled by that of his friends and advisers, and, as every playgoer knows, *Garrick* became one of the most successful of his impersonations. No doubt the wonderful drunken scene, clever in its conception and perfect in its detail, was the great feature of the piece; but though some critics took exception to his acting,

in the love-scenes with *Ada Ingot*, he gained in them a multitude of devoted admirers. Generally willing to accept the verdict of the press, Sothern was always rather sore with regard to this alleged defect in his performance, and I very well remember how, on one occasion, when, on his benefit night in a provincial town, he made one of those little before-the-curtain speeches for which he was famous, he said, "The local critics have unanimously declared that, unfortunately for my career as an actor, my voice is wholly unsuited to 'love-making.' With some compunction, and with my hand appropriately placed on my heart, I should like to inform those gentlemen that, following in private life that most agreeable of pursuits, I find that I *get on as well as most people!*"

When "David Garrick" was first produced in London, Sothern (still thinking that he had made a failure) generously declared that the piece was saved by the exquisite acting of Miss Nellie Moore in the character of *Ada Ingot;* but long after that charming young actress was dead it drew enthusiastic audiences, and Mr. Charles

Wyndham has recently shown that it still has abundant vitality. Other actors, and notably Mr. Edward Compton, have also successfully played this difficult but effective part. Sothern, however, was its creator, and, surely, his finished and most artistic performance will live in the history of the stage?

The next Haymarket production in which he appeared was a clever but not very long-lived play by Mr. Watts Phillips, entitled "The Woman in Mauve;" and then came a "happy thought." Although the popularity of *Dundreary* was by no means exhausted, it was, from a managerial point of view, very important that he should "rest" for awhile; and who, with playgoers, could fill his place so suitably as that *Brother Sam* whose famous letter had been read so often, and whose name was already as familiar in their mouths as household words? For this character Sothern had already found his type in a man who, while only possessed of some £400 a year, managed, without the remotest blemish on his name, to live at the rate of £5000 or £6000 a year. The task of writing the piece was entrusted to the late John

Oxenford, and under the brightest of auspices *Sam* made his appearance on the Haymarket boards. Once more the ease and excellence of Sothern's acting, his faultless dress, and his effective "make up," were the talk of the town, and the interest in the new character was ingeniously kept alive by reason of the cleverly conceived contrast between the appearance and personal traits of the stage brothers.

The elegant and deliberate *Dundreary* was as dark as hair-dye could make him, and the impediment in his speech had been more than half his fortune: the *Hon. Sam Slingsby* was as light in apparel, complexion, and bearing as a feather from a dove's wing, while in speech he was as rapid as ever was the voluble Charles Mathews in farces of the type of "Patter *versus* Clatter." *Sam's* ready impudence and polished manner secured a host of friends and admirers, and once more genuine success was secured.

But the younger brother could hardly expect to have as many devoted followers as the bearer of the family title, and, amusing company though he was, his popularity in due course waned, and in

about twelve months' time he made way for *Frank Annerly* in Dr. Westland Marston's brilliant comedy, "The Favourite of Fortune." How good Sothern was in this part many will remember. The character was a happy medium between the handsome, sentimental heroes that he always wanted to represent, and the finished comedy studies in which he excelled. No doubt the audience liked *Frank Annerly* best when, in cynical mood, he dealt with the apparent faithlessness of poor *Hester Lorrington* and the worldliness of her friends, and, with irresistible precision, made point after point in the clever dialogue of the piece; but I am quite sure that Sothern enjoyed himself most when, at the end of the first act, he was the recipient of the cheers of the supernumeraries whom he was supposed, in the most dashing manner, to have rescued from a watery grave. Those cheers were (as such cheers always are) re-echoed by the audience, and, elated by them, Sothern, the greatest character delineator of his day, and then, on account of his great success, his own master, once more imagined himself the ideal stage-lover.

And so it came about that, after an interval of nearly fifteen years, he again essayed the character of *Claude Melnotte*.

In the peasant's dress, the handsome costumes of the supposed *Prince of Como*, and the uniform of the *French Colonel*, he looked the part to perfection; but, although on the occasion of the first performance (it was at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, for the benefit of his old friend, Mr. J. C. Smith, and Mrs. Kendal, then Miss Madge Robertson, was the most effective and fascinating of *Paulines*) the piece went admirably, and the applause at the end of each act was deafening, Sothern's acting fell far short of his conception of the character. It was a curious result, for he attacked the part with enthusiasm; he longed for unqualified success, and he had (a rare thing in him) unlimited confidence in himself; but somehow the performance lacked the true ring. I cannot, perhaps, better show what was the one thing wanting than by saying that when, in the last act, with *Pauline* in his arms, he spoke the lines—

"Look up! Look up, Pauline! for I can bear
Thine eyes! The stain is blotted from my name.
I have redeem'd mine honour. I can call
On France to sanction thy divine forgiveness!
Oh, joy! Oh, rapture! By the midnight watch-fires
Thus have I seen thee! thus foretold this hour!
And 'midst the roar of battle, thus have heard
The beating of thy heart against my own!"

he delivered them (although I am convinced that he felt every word of them) in precisely the same fashion as when, in mock earnestness, he had, with slight alterations, to give utterance to them as *Sir Hugh de Brass* (one of his best parts) in the farce called "A Regular Fix." How wonderfully true, even after the lapse of these years, was the already quoted criticism of Charles Kean—

"I thought your acting in 'Used Up' *very good indeed*, but in *Claude Melnotte* it suggested itself to me that you occasionally 'preached' too much, instead of giving vent to the impulse of the character."

Strive though he did, Sothern was never able to make a real success in "The Lady of Lyons;" but in the "Charles Mathews" characters to be found in such pieces as "Used Up" and "A Regular Fix," he was ever admirable. I re-

member on that first appearance as *Claude Melnotte* he did a thing that for some moments put in jeopardy the whole performance. In the second act, where *Colonel Damas* tests the masquerading *Prince of Como* by addressing him in the Italian language, and *Claude* ought only to reply with a puzzled "Hem—hem," and "What does he mean, I wonder?" Sothern permitted himself to drop into his lightest manner, and even to indulge in some "Dundrearyisms," saying, "Yes, that is d—d funny," and so on. The audience, recognizing the method of an old friend and favourite, roared with laughter, and it was some time before the rash actor could again secure hushed attention.

Still believing himself to be a perfect *Claude*, Sothern persevered with the part, until a country critic, who meant to be both friendly and complimentary, said that until he had undertaken it no one had quite appreciated its *humour!* This, as he himself said, was a "crusher," and, with a groan, the peasant's, the prince's, and the colonel's costumes were permanently consigned to the wardrobe.

In December, 1866, Sothern appeared at the

Haymarket as *Harry Vivian*, in a three-act comedy by Tom Taylor, entitled "A Lesson for Life." It was a pleasant part, which made no very great demand upon his powers, but in which he was able, even more conclusively than before, to prove that he, before all the actors of his day, was able to portray the easy manners of the perfect English gentleman. In speaking of this performance, an eminent critic said, "As an earnest student in his profession, Mr. Sothern has worked with a zeal which has rarely been excelled. The prominent characteristic of his style is the air of modern refinement with which he surrounds the personage represented. There is nothing conventional about his movements, nothing which belongs to the stilted mannerisms of the past school of histrionic art. We have the polished ease of good society faithfully illustrated, the reality of nature in place of the artificiality of the stage, and a life-like portrait painted in vivid colours as an acceptable substitute for the faded caricature which has too often passed current with hasty observers for the semblance of a gentleman."

"A Lesson for Life" was followed by appearances as *Robert Devlin* in "A Wild Goose," and *Albert Bressange* in "A Wife Well Won;" but though, concerning the latter piece, Sothern (who strongly fancied his part in it) wrote, "The Prince of Wales told me he was charmed with it," neither play ran long, and in neither did he materially add to his reputation. "A Wife Well Won" will, however, be vividly remembered by all who saw it, for in it Miss Madge Robertson, then on the threshold of her brilliant career, played its girlish heroine in a manner so captivating as to be absolutely irresistible. Sothern always used to speak of it as the most charming impersonation he had seen.

At about this time a play that would really hold the stage in "Our American Cousin," "David Garrick," or even "Brother Sam" fashion, was eagerly sought at the Haymarket, and after much deliberation a strong, and, as it proved, successful bid for popularity was made in the production of Dr. Westland Marston's adaptation of Mons. Octave Feuillet's "Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre," entitled (Sothern, surely, had

something to do with the selection of the English name?) "A Hero of Romance." In this, as *Victor, Marquis de Tourville*, the energetic actor gained great popularity in the direction in which he had always aimed. Never was a more interesting personage than this ruined young *Marquis*, performing the duties of steward in the *parvenu* family of the haughty young lady of his love, seen upon the stage. What a thrill went through the audience when the gallant youth quitted the stage and ("off") conquered in a few moments the unheard-of vices of that singularly unmanageable horse "Black Harry;" what sympathy was accorded him when he submissively bore the taunts of proud and unyielding beauty; what a sensation there was in the house when, in order to save his own honour and her reputation, he rushed "three steps at a time" up the ruined tower, and, by the light of a pale moon, recklessly flung himself from its dizzy height on to the yawning feather-bed in the unseen depths below; and how copiously the tears fell when, exquisitely dressed in a perfectly fitting seal-skin trimmed coat, the like of which had never been seen before

(and which no one but the Sothern of those days dare have worn), he burnt the will in the candle, dedicating the sacrifice to his past love, and subsequently receiving in the hand of the arrogant young lady the just reward of his manly virtue! "A Hero of Romance" became the hero of his day, and when the piece was brought into the provinces young women lost their hearts to him, and young men, at penny readings, burnt foolscap wills in inexpensive candles, but, since they had not facilities for the leap from the tower, and could not treat themselves to collars and cuffs of seal-skin, achieved only half success. I do not think that *Victor, Marquis de Tourville*, was the best thing that Sothern did in this way, but it was theatrically the most effective, and is, consequently, ranked amongst his list of triumphs.

The next Haymarket production was "Home," the clever adaptation by his friend, Tom Robertson, of Emile Augier's "L'Aventurière," and in it solid success was once more gained. As his part was not a "romantic" one, Sothern was very doubtful concerning it, but after its production he wrote, "'Home' is a great hit—every one

giving me far more praise than I deserve. I played so nervously the first night that I fully expected a cutting-up in the papers. However, the public is satisfied, and I always acknowledge the verdict it gives, *pro* or *con.*" "Home" had a highly satisfactory run in London, and by his impersonation of *Colonel John White*, Sothern undoubtedly added to his laurels both in England and America. One of the great attractions of the piece was a "love-scene," of which Sothern subsequently claimed to be the author. Certainly —for it was to a certain degree written upon *Dundreary* lines—he played it to perfection.

While this pretty play was at the height of its popularity there seemed to come the promise of great things. "I've a *great* part," he wrote. "I expect another *Dundreary* success in my next piece, which I shall try in Birmingham." This part was *Sir Simon Simple*, in H. J. Byron's "Not Such a Fool as He Looks." He did try it in Birmingham, and, wonderfully made up in a wig so flaxen that it was almost white, and presenting a clean-shaven and boyish face, with an entirely novel break in the voice that was as natural as

it was effective, he scored a splendid first night success. According to his wont, however, he was dissatisfied, and declared that both piece and part must be altered. This the author, having faith in his work, declined to do. "Byron demands 'Sir Simon Simple'" (it was, by the way, under this title that he produced the piece) "back again," he wrote a few weeks later on. "I'm not sorry, though it's a lot of work thrown away." How Byron himself made the part popular in London every one knows, and subsequently Sothern recognized the fact that he had thrown away a chance. Again, though later on, he wrote, "I am about to produce another comedy, 'Birth,' by Tom Robertson. I've much faith in it,—a pretty plot, and my part peculiar and original." This he played in several provincial towns, and the audiences heartily endorsed his privately expressed opinion; but although after the first performance he telegraphed, "'Birth' a genuine HIT," he again suffered from want of confidence, and abandoned a piece in which he would have probably achieved a lasting success.

The next Haymarket production in which

Sothern appeared was the two-act comedy by H. T. Craven (according to his custom this, too, had been previously tried in the provinces), entitled "Barwise's Book," and in it, for the first time since his great successes, he assumed what may fairly be called (although from first to last the piece, in tone and treatment, was comic) the character of "stage villain." The experiment is noteworthy, and deserves description.

"In *Charles Mulcraft*," said a critic, "Mr. Sothern has a character somewhat different from any that he has hitherto attempted: his personations have been usually of amiable if not excellent fellows—for even for *Dundreary*, selfish as he is, one cannot but entertain a certain sneaking kindness. *Mulcraft*, however, is a piece of cool and superficial selfishness, without a single spark of principle or generosity; yet in manners and style a gentleman, and quite unlike the common theatrical villain and plotter. He commits forgery as if there were no offence in it; and as he sins without compunction, discovery brings to him regret at being discovered, without a shade of remorse for having sinned. The conception of such a

character is decidedly original; it loses nothing in being worked out by Mr. Sothern. To live a gay, easy, showy, idle life, of the pleasures of which he has a keen appreciation, is *Mulcraft's* best philosophy; to obtain the means of so doing he is ready to sacrifice all the moralities, and without feeling or personally making any sacrifice in so doing. The end, if only it be attained, is to him complete justification of the means. He is a type—which might be worked up even more highly than the author has done in the present case—of the perfectly presentable nineteenth-century Bohemian; the whited sepulchre of modern society—gorgeous without, but empty and contemptible within. He is not even a professor of virtue; the substantiality of means, and an outer coating of respectability suffices him; his soul, if he have a soul, is therewith content. Mr. Sothern presents the shallow rogue—who never, to give him his due, pretends or attempts depth—with the fidelity of a photograph; giving bare fact, without appeal to sympathy, either approbative or reprobatory. He is dressed in the extravagance of modern fashion—extrava-

gance without vulgarity, except in so far as high fashion is always vulgar; and one confesses, on seeing and hearing him for the two hours which the piece lasts, that—except that few even of such characters would go the length of forgery—the portrait is a fair reflection of many men of the time. His doings and character scarcely excite any emotion beyond a sort of amazed contempt; he is a fellow to whom one would prefer giving a wide berth, but on whom moral indignation would be utterly thrown away. Mr. Sothern confines himself within the limits of the character with admirable self-command; he is neither tempted on the one hand to lead us to despise *Mulcraft* by making him a cleverer villain than he is, nor on the other to excuse his villainy by making him more than superficially attractive. It is a part in which there is much more talent than meets the eye; only an actor who has latent power of a very high order could afford to sink so much of it in the elaboration of a character so little stagey, yet so cruelly true to nature of an artificial order as this. Of course, every point is wrought up to perfection; and the closeness with which the

audience follows, shows how thoroughly they enjoy Mr. Sothern's admirably-finished acting."

Clever as this new study was, "Barwise's Book" was too slight a piece for a prolonged run, and another play, tried in the country, was a three-act comedy, by Messrs. Maddison Morton and A. W. Young, entitled "A Threepenny Bit," in which Sothern was well suited as a terribly nervous gentleman named *Augustus Thrillington*; but this was only seen in London in condensed one-act form, under the new title of "Not if I Know It!" At about this time, too, he reappeared (the part was always a favourite one with him, and right splendidly, in his handsome dress, he bore himself) as the amusing hero of "The Captain of the Watch;" but the next important Haymarket production in which he figured was H. J. Byron's three-act comedy, "An English Gentleman." Sothern's part in this (I believe that Byron had previously played it himself, then calling the piece "The Last Shilling") was that of *Charles Chuckles*, a warm-hearted, cool-headed, but not too quick-witted young English squire, who, being duped by impostors, deems it a matter

of honour to give up his estates, and who having, to the amazement of the audience, done many eccentric and quixotic things while in a state of penury, comes to his own again, and marries the heroine, just in the nick of time for the fall of the curtain. In describing the character as a "cool-headed" one, I forgot, for the moment, that Sothern caused *Squire Chuckles* to appear in neatly cropped flaming red hair. The make up was both new and effective, but "An English Gentleman" was not a very interesting or attractive play, and its life was not longer than its deserts.

The eagerly sought "Second *Dundreary* success" was apparently as far off as ever, when, during one of his American engagements, it seemed to be suddenly found. I cannot help thinking that it was because the nervous and over-sensitive Sothern had allowed Byron to make the success as *Sir Simon Simple* that, but for his want of confidence, might have been his, he was ever ready to try a part in which Byron had gained popularity. Nothing could have seemed more out of Sothern's somewhat limited range

than the character of the disappointed provincial tragedian, *Fitzaltamont*, which Byron had created at the Adelphi, in March, 1870, and which he had again portrayed at the Strand, in October, 1872, calling the piece in which it was the central figure, in the first place, "The Prompter's Box," and in the second, "Two Stars; or, The Footlights and the Fireside."

Sothern never saw the piece performed, but of course he knew of it, and when, while in Philadelphia, a friend suggested that the part would suit him, he at once telegraphed to Byron for a copy of it. Having received and read it, the idea took his fancy, and, to use his own words, "It appeared to me that if I could good-naturedly satirise the old school of acting, contrasting it through the several characters with the present school, I should arrive at the same effects in another manner which were produced in *Dundreary;* that is to say, that though stigmatized by everybody as a very bad tragedian, I should gain the sympathy of the audience in the satire, however much they might laugh at my peculiarities. The character is not an imitation of

any one actor I have ever seen. I have simply boiled down all the old school tragedians as I boiled down all the fops I had met before I played *Dundreary*. I tested the piece in Philadelphia, and its success was immediate. In my judgment, 'The Crushed Tragedian,' if not the best part in my repertory, is likely to command popular favour at once wherever it is performed, and to retain its hold upon the stage for many years."

In view of the reception of Sothern's appearance in this character in London, it may be instructive to glance at what leading American critics had to say concerning it. It is as follows:—

"Mr. Sothern's impersonation of *Fitzaltamont*, 'The Crushed Tragedian,' is the more impressive the oftener it is seen, and the more attentively it is studied. To fully appreciate its surpassing merits as a dramatic realization, it is necessary to do something more than look and laugh. It is only when we have seen Mr. Sothern's performance so often that we can forego the enjoyment of the playgoer, to watch with the eyes of a student, that the artistic power of the creation is revealed. Then, and not till then, do we begin

to understand what a creation his *Fitzaltamont* really is.

"Much has been said of the wonderful versatility of the actor who could, from *Dundreary*, transform himself with such magical completeness into that utter antithesis of the English fop, the sombre, misanthropic, theatrical *Fitzaltamont;* but this versatility, noteworthy as it is, is one of the least remarkable characteristics of the impersonation. The greatest merit of his *Fitzaltamont* lies in this—that out of a mere thing of threads and patches, out of a stage tradition, a conventional laughing-stock, a popular butt, he has created a living, sentient human being. Into the dry bones of a common caricature he has breathed vitality, for it is just as impossible not to recognize in the 'Crushed' a fellow-being, having the same feelings and affections as ourselves, as it is not to laugh at the strange eccentricities which distinguish him. *Fitz* is human to begin with, and so commands our sympathies. He is also in dead earnest. He believes in his own powers with all his might and main. His vanity is equal to that which consumed the heart of

Malvolio, and his vanity impels him, as it impelled the cross-gartered steward, to believe anything of himself and his capacities. From some reason or other, *Fitzaltamont* has taken up the idea that he is a tragic genius, and he believes that with all his heart and soul. When he announces himself as being 'crushed,' it is with the utmost sincerity. The spectator knows better. He knows that his vanity is *Fitzaltamont's* stock-in-trade, and thus the character becomes laughter-provoking.

"And how laughable it is, only those who have seen Mr. Sothern play it can form an idea. With what elaboration of detail does the actor embody his conception! There is not a gesture, not an intonation, not a movement, but it seems to illustrate the character portrayed. He strides across the stage, and it is as though he were wading through a sea of gore; he mutters to himself, 'Ha! ha!' and you know that he is cursing fate with a bitterness loud and deep; he scowls, and it is plain that he thinks his frown is as majestic as Olympian Jove himself; he flings himself in a chair as though wearied with such a continual battling with destiny; he leans, in

contemplation, against the mantelpiece, and it is manifest that he is philosophically pondering, *à la* 'Hamlet,' upon the vanity of the world, and its lack of appreciation for genius, and always and in all things poor *Fitzaltamont* is exquisitely, indescribably ludicrous.

"But, whatever he says or does, no faintest suspicion that he is making himself ridiculous ever crosses his mind. He is without the least scintilla of humour, and, acting as he is all the time, he is all the time in deadly earnest. It is the world that is out of joint—not he. Mr. Sothern's impersonation of 'The Crushed Tragedian' is no less an acquisition to the dramatic world, than a triumph of the actor's talent."

Another well-known American writer said, "When a new, distinct, and enjoyable character is created by author and actor for the dramatic stage, it has good title to take rank among other works of art. It is in many respects just such a creation as an accepted masterpiece of sculpture, or a finished painting, or a grand piece of music, to which the cultivated mind pays homage of admiration for the skill, the study, the talent, or

the genius displayed in the achievement. Something like this is done by Mr. Sothern in the study and representation of *Fitzaltamont*, the 'Crushed Tragedian.' This new character stands out like a statue, or the central figure of a life-like picture. It is not only distinct from all others of the characters with which our dramas are peopled, but it is as opposite as possible to *Dundreary*, that other creation of Mr. Sothern with which his fame as a dramatic artist is so largely identified, and there is not the faintest flavour of Mr. Sothern's own individuality in it.

"It is not our purpose to describe the 'Crushed Tragedian.' It would require a good deal of study to do even that in a satisfactory way. The play must be seen and heard to be understood, and it will be the better enjoyed by those who go to see it if they have no detailed description. It may be said, however, that, notwithstanding the 'dejected 'haviour of the visage' of *Fitzaltamont*, and his inky habiliments, very seedy and baggy, and the many set-backs he suffers in pursuing the pet ambition of his life, his expression of his professional woes is so grotesque

and ludicrous that the audience is in one continuous strain of laughter so long as he is on the stage."

Concerning this new success, Sothern wrote to England, "'The Crushed Tragedian' is literally a tremendous HIT. Not even standing-room; and next Saturday will be our fiftieth night. Five calls nightly after the fourth act, and all purely done by BUSINESS, as I am not on the stage for four pages until the end of the act. It has neatly 'walked over' *Dundreary's* head, and will go a good year in London. I have greatly altered the piece and re-written my part to a very great extent. I have gently satirised the old school of acting without burlesquing it. In short, without egotism, I may truly tell you that I have once more 'struck oil,' as they say in America."

That, notwithstanding Sothern's high hopes concerning it, "The Crushed Tragedian" failed in London, is now a matter of stage history. It was first, in the May of 1878, "tried" in Birmingham, and the keenness of his disappointment at the Haymarket must have been terribly aggravated

by the enthusiasm with which his performance had been on the previous night received by his old friends the provincial playgoers. Before he stepped on to the Birmingham boards he, in his usual nervous way, expressed some doubt. "The part was a great hit in America," he said; "but the question is, how will it be received in England?" The Midlanders, at least, were not slow to answer the question. The house was packed, the reception of *Fitzaltamont*, in his wonderful dress and make-up, was immense, and the piece and the impersonation were received with boisterous acclamation. The judicious, however, shook their heads, and it was a significant fact that, in the leading local paper of the next day, there was no notice of "The Crushed Tragedian." When the performance was over, I went round to see Sothern and to take him home. "He has just gone," said the stage-door keeper, "and he told me to tell you that you would find him"—giving me a card—"at this address." Knowing that he had not had time to change his dress, I thought at first that he was playing me one of his notorious and never-ending

practical jokes; but, finding that he was not in his dressing-room, I went to the place named, and there I found him, close on midnight, in all the "bravery" of "The Crushed Tragedian," as "The Mammoth Comique," being photographed under the blinding glare of the electric light! It was a curious sight, and one that I am unlikely to forget — the wonderfully painted and disguised face, the gaudy and exaggerated costume, the carefully studied pose, and the eager and excited interest of the sitter! With this quaint companion I returned to the theatre, that he might change his dress, and over his after-supper cigar that night he became enthusiastic. "I have got my second *Dundreary* success," he declared. "I didn't know how 'Fitz' would go in England, and, mark me, this means five hundred nights at the Haymarket!" Full of assurance, he left me the next day for London; in the evening "The Crushed Tragedian" was produced on the boards that had witnessed *Dundreary's* London triumph, and—well, the fate of that version of Byron's play is well known.

The next day he wrote, "An organized

system to d—n the piece. Rows of hissers! We'll see who'll win."

We know now who won, and I fear that the loss of the game told heavily on poor Sothern's heart. It is not for me to defend, in the face of abler critics, "The Crushed Tragedian," but I think that all who saw the impersonation will allow that it contained many touches by no means unworthy of the creator of *Dundreary*. It was, however, "*caviare* to the general," and, as a matter of consequence, failed to attract.

Of it a well-known London writer said, "Mr. Sothern's make-up is very droll, his control of his voice is remarkable, and his facial play is indescribable. Had he played the *rôle* he assumes in a piece of half the length, he would have obtained a conspicuous triumph."

In America *Fitzaltamont* was always triumphant, and an extraordinary lawsuit, in which he was the defendant, added to his notoriety and popularity. Count Joannes, once an actor of the old school of which Sothern made fun, and subsequently an eccentric lawyer, actually brought a suit to stop the performance of the piece on

the ground that Sothern's make-up maligned him, and generally burlesqued his identity.

A reporter of an American paper, who called on Sothern with the view of obtaining information concerning these preposterous and abortive proceedings, wrote as follows:—

"Mr. Sothern had just driven up, and was alighting from his *coupé* when a reporter reached the stage-door of the Park Theatre. As the 'Crushed Tragedian' was to come on very shortly, he invited the caller to go into his dressing-room and talk with him while he was making-up. He had not heard of the Count's proceedings, and was inclined to discredit the story. 'It's some joke,' said he, unbuttoning his shirt collar and reading a slip of newspaper which had been handed to him, containing an application of the Count to the court. 'Why, I never saw the man but once in my life, and that was four months after I began the "Crushed Tragedian." Does he *really* look like the Crushed? Well, God help him! Been thirty years making a reputation?—that's not an unusual time; I have known it to take longer—and I am

taking it from *him!* Come, now, that's *too* much! Seriously, *is* this thing true? Well, if it is, and if I have to go down to that court to show cause, by George, I pity the man that brings me! I won't let him rest while his worried life clings to him! He shall get telegrams and post-cards from this time on for ever. Do about it? Why, I shall appear, of course! But I don't know anything about it, except what you have just told me. Now, my hair'—to his servant, who handed him his wig —'has the Count Joannes really hair like this? I cannot believe it—it is some monstrous sell.'

"Mr. Sothern had put on the long, solemn hair of the 'Crushed Tragedian,' and his eyes were circled about with rings of tearful red, when there was a knock at the door, and another reporter was announced—from the *Tribune*. Mr. Sothern threw a look of dark suspicion into his eyes and sadly shook hands with him.

"'I suppose you have heard, Mr. Sothern,' said the new-comer, 'that the Count Joannes has obtained an order from the court for you to show cause why you should not be restrained from playing the "Crushed Tragedian?"'

"'Is this a joke, sir?' asked the actor, very stiffly.

"'Oh no, indeed! It is a fact. He really has. Haven't you heard of it?'

"'I think there is a conspiracy, and now it strikes me that you are in it. I never played a practical joke in my life. But, go on, sir.'

"'Really, Mr. Sothern, this is a serious matter. The Count has actually obtained——'

"'Do you mean to tell me, on your honour, that you are not attempting to joke with me?'

"'No, indeed; I——'

"'Remember, I am not to be trifled with.'

"'Do you anticipate any personal trouble between the Count and yourself?'

"'If what you tell me is true, I *do*.'

"'In case of a duel, from whom would the challenge naturally come?'

"'Oh, from him! He is my senior, and I would not think of cutting in in such a matter.'

"'But he is titled, and, as far as I know, a similar honour has never been conferred upon you by any German potentate.'

"'Only because I have been too busy to think

of it. It's waiting for me, and I can have it any time I please.'

"'How would you fight the Count if he should challenge you?'

"'I should prefer the date to be the first of April, and, although I haven't yet fully considered the question, I think the weapons should be cannon. Yes, on reflection, I am sure I shall insist upon those new cannon that discharge one hundred and seventy shots a minute. He shall sit upon one of those engines and I upon another, and we will continue to discharge them until there shall be no remnant of either the Count or Sothern.'"

But although the actor treated the whole thing as a joke, Count Joannes was terribly in earnest. Of course nothing came of his "suit" except a capital advertisement for *Fitzaltamont*, of which full advantage was taken.

When "The Crushed Tragedian" so signally failed at the Haymarket, Sothern appeared for a short time as *Sydney Spoonbill,* in a three-act farcical play by H. J. Byron, entitled "A Hornet's Nest;" but, as he himself said, it was

"simply a case of dressing himself well, and larking about the stage for an hour or so," and, though it caused abundant laughter, the impersonation did not add to his reputation.

For benefits, and on other similar occasions, he now and then took other parts, but this practically exhausts the list of important characters in which he was seen on the English stage.

For the benefit of Edwin Adams, in New York, one act of "Othello" was given, with Sothern as the Moor, Florence as *Iago*, Lotta as *Desdemona*, and Mrs. John Drew as *Emilia*. Of this performance one who was present said, "Mrs. Drew acted *Emilia* superbly, and of course in all seriousness; but little Lotta, the American Chaumont, burlesqued *Desdemona* by kicking her train and rattling off the speeches, much to the disgust of poor Sothern, who, magnificently costumed, played *Othello* in dead earnest, much to the disappointment of the audience, who had expected all sorts of antics from Florence and himself. In this case, as frequently off the stage, Sothern suffered from his reputation as an incorrigible *farceur;* frequently, when he was quite

serious in conversation, he would find people laughing at his remarks."

I have sometimes thought that it was the recollection (if not the mortification) of these moments that first made Sothern think he would like to play "The Crushed Tragedian." Concerning his benefit performance, in which he failed to impress an American audience with his *Othello*, he wrote to England, "Ned Adams's (dying) benefit comes to over £2000, but the excitement and worry have made me really ill." Poor Sothern! He little thought then how near he was to his own end!

Of new pieces, and ideas for new pieces, his busy brain was always full. *Dundreary* shown under new conditions was always with him a favourite notion, and I once heard him say, with a half laugh, after nervously thrashing out a number of droll notions in this connection, "'Dundreary's Funeral' wouldn't be a bad title, would it?" There was to be a piece called "The Founder of the Family," in which the father of *Dundreary* and his brother *Sam* was to be introduced to the public. The manuscript of

this play is in existence, and the idea of it is excellent. The "Founder" is depicted as a kind-hearted, aristocratic Englishman, absolutely without a memory — an elaborate and altogether whimsical, but always gentlemanly, *Mr. Gatherwool.* I believe that Mr. E. H. Sothern intends to try this piece in America; he possesses much of his father's peculiar talent and method, and I hope and believe that he will succeed in it. In a piece that was written for, but never acted by, his father by Messrs. Robert Reece and Maddison Morton, and the title of which has been altered from "Trade" to "The Highest Bidder," he has already won fame and fortune.

Sothern always very much regretted that he had not had the chance of creating the character of *Cheviot Hill* in Mr. W. S. Gilbert's excruciatingly funny comedy "Engaged." "It is what I have been waiting for for years," he declared; "it would have fitted me like a glove." Few playgoers who remember the actor's quaint method, and bear in mind Mr. Gilbert's ingeniously conceived character, will in this instance doubt his judgment. In *Cheviot Hill* he would very likely

have found his "second *Dundreary* success." But for ill-health he would have played the part in New York, and, knowing that Americans have no associations with the "Cheviot Hills," he proposed to alter the name of the character to *The Marquis of Piccadilly*. There were other pieces by Dr. Westland Marston concerning which he was justifiably sanguine, but in which he never appeared. The last work upon which I saw him engaged was the study of the play specially written for him by Mr. Gilbert, entitled "Foggerty's Fairy." When this piece was produced by Mr. Charles Wyndham at the Criterion it did not prove a great attraction, but I, who heard Sothern read it, and was thus able to understand his grasp of a very peculiar character, believe that in his hands it would have been a striking success. His carefully marked copy of the play is before me now. Another idea of his was a play in which he might assume madness, just as in "David Garrick" he simulated drunkenness. He only gave this up when a friend of his—a physician—told him that when he was a medical adviser at a madhouse, and was compelled to listen to the wild

vagaries of his patients, he found himself drifting unconsciously into the same channels, his sleep being disturbed by strange dreams, and his whole nature absorbed in the contemplation of the mad-world. Insanity seemed to follow him like a nightmare, until at last, finding that his mind was likely to become more or less sympathetically affected, he determined to sacrifice his salary, retire from the institution, and commence the ordinary practice of medicine. Sothern, who had almost a morbid horror of madness, dreaded a similar experience, and immediately abandoned the project. A piece that was written for him while he had it in view, and of which he had approved, has been produced by Mr. Edward Compton under the title of "The Actor."

Few who witnessed the delightful ease with which he went through his parts would imagine that Sothern was the most nervous of actors. But it was so, and he once said, "I think that most of our best actors are painfully nervous, especially on the first two or three nights of a performance in which they may be specially interested; and my experience tells me that

people with this temperament are never fully satisfied with their labours. They are perpetually polishing, improving, and revising. The very instant that an actor is satisfied with his own work, and believes himself to have reached the *acme* of cleverness, from that moment he begins to deteriorate. I am more nervous in going before an audience now than I was twenty years ago. During the first night of 'The Crushed Tragedian' a lady with whom I was playing told me she thought I was going to drop on the stage in a faint, and I thought so too, for my hands and feet were as cold as marble. This, however, is by no means strange. I have seen one of the oldest and most distinguished actors on the English stage with his tongue so completely paralysed for several seconds, that he was obliged to wet his lips before he could deliver a line."

It is worthy of note here that although Sothern always wished to excel and be received in serious parts, he believed that comedy required even more intensity, and, as he would put it, "magnetism," than melodrama or tragedy, because,

he declared, "in the one case the actor may find his effect created simply by the representation of a touching story, while in the other, unless the performer by action fully illustrates the humour of an idea, the comedy fails to be appreciated, and the magnetic power of his art is absent."

Never should it be forgotten that, ever mindful of his early struggles and disappointments, Sothern, in the day of his triumph, did all that in him lay for the charitable institutions of the theatrical profession. In October, 1871, making a "farewell" appearance at the Haymarket prior to his departure to America, he generously handed over his share of the profits of a memorable evening to the Royal General Theatrical Fund. The house was, in a pecuniary sense, a very large one, the receipts amounting to nearly £500. After deducting Mr. Buckstone's share of the proceeds, and the usual expenses, Sothern contributed to the charity the handsome sum of £204. The ordinary receipts were increased by admirers of the actor, who secured private boxes at abnormal prices, by others who willingly paid double prices for their stalls, and by twenty-five enthusiasts who paid a

guinea each to go behind the scenes and bid the most popular actor of his day good-bye.

Speaking of this performance and its results, the *Times* said, "Mr. Sothern has thus signalized his departure by a munificent act of charity, augmenting a popularity which scarcely seemed susceptible of increase, and there is no doubt that his reappearance at the Haymarket next summer will be eagerly anticipated by the playgoing world of England. Since he first made our public acquainted with *Lord Dundreary* he has been a noted figure, constantly present on the London or provincial stage, and his visit to the United States will cause a serious gap in the theatrical amusements of the three kingdoms."

Nine months later he did a still more notable thing, and in speaking of it I may once more quote the *Times*:—

"Probably in the history of the theatrical profession there is no fact more extraordinary or more honourable than the appearance of Mr. Sothern on Wednesday night. In the middle of an American engagement he crosses the Atlantic for the express purpose of representing his great

character, *Lord Dundreary*, for the benefit of the Royal General Theatrical Fund. Of course, everybody was delighted with an exhibition of character which bears witness to an original genius worthy of Rabelais; but the cheers which welcomed his graceful words of farewell were given, not merely to the great actor, but to the generous benefactor. The deed of charity done, Mr. Sothern recrosses the Atlantic, and pursues the course of his American engagement."

In concluding my chapter on "Sothern on the Stage," I cannot do better than quote Dr. Westland Marston, who, besides being an acute critic and an undoubted authority, had, as we have seen, exceptional opportunities of forming an opinion of his acting capacities. He says, "In broad or eccentric characters, Mr. Sothern's humour was peculiar to itself. In refined comedy, his manner, albeit less airy than that of the younger Mathews, was not dissimilar. Moreover, in his power in the direction of sentiment, though special and very limited, he differed from his brother-comedian, in whom it scarcely existed. Sothern, though somewhat heavy in serious delivery, could be

earnest and telling in sarcasm, and I have known him, on one or two occasions, surprise the house by a touch of pathos, all the more telling from contrast with his reckless levity. But in his peculiarity as an eccentric humorist he had no rival in his own day—no successful competitor.

"Whether by design or by instinct, he was complete master of all that is irresistible in the unexpected. If, as in *Lord Dundreary*, the character he assumed was half-idiotic, he would deliver its absurdities with an air of profound sagacity, and now and then relieve them by a sharp thrust of shrewd common sense. If his mistakes were ridiculous and farcical, as when he stumbled into the lap of an old dowager, the confusion that the mistake occasioned him, and his air of well-bred contrition, half-redeemed him in one's opinion.

"In his early performances in 'David Garrick'—especially the scenes in which he attempts to disenchant the citizen's daughter by assuming the excesses of a drunkard—Mr. Sothern was droll and effective, without being overstrained, and there was real feeling in his sense of the

humiliation he inflicts upon himself to save the girl who loves him from a misplaced passion. His declamation of some tragic lines, though a little heightened for the special occasion, was so fervent, that it might have been effective if his acting had been in earnest. More than once, when he expressed his besetting desire to play tragedy, and his fear that after *Lord Dundreary* the public would not accept him, 'Deliver tragedy,' I said, 'as you do in "David Garrick," only omit the touch of burlesque, and you may succeed.' 'Ah! but it is just because in "David Garrick" it is burlesque,' he replied, 'that I dare let myself go.' This reply seemed to me to light up the entire position."

It lighted up the position very perfectly indeed.

CHAPTER II.

SOTHERN OFF THE STAGE.

"It is not a matter of wonder that Sothern is spoken of as 'a prince of good fellows.' He is magnetic in manner, humorous in speech, rich in reminiscence, responsive and sympathetic, a good listener, an equally good talker, and always sparkling like a newly-opened bottle of champagne. With such a battery of social forces, added to ability of a high order in the representation of the peculiar characters with which his name is now identified on both sides the Atlantic, professional success has been a legitimate result. In person Mr. Sothern is probably five feet ten inches in height, and put together as if intended for hard work. He is wiry, elastic, as restless as a bundle of nerves under galvanic influence, and would be marked in any crowd as a man possessed of strong

individuality and unusual personal characteristics. In age the actor has been so well preserved that, like Tim Linkinwater, he might have been born one hundred and fifty years old, and gradually come down to five-and-twenty, for he seems younger every birthday than he was the year before. His face, undisturbed by a wrinkle or a line of trouble, and habitually quiet, is still lighted up under a mass of beautiful white hair by a pair of bright bluish-grey eyes, which look as if they were undergoing continual drill to keep them in proper subjection. It is a countenance full of expression —now as imperturbable as if it were carved out of *lignum vitæ*, a perfect dead wall, and again filled with a crowd of welcomes shining out of every smile. A long grey moustache hides the mouth, but fails to conceal the many little lights that hover round the corners, especially when the mental fireworks are let off, and one begins to feel as if he were an aurora borealis. Tidy in dress, with little or no display of jewellery, ingenuous, open and frank in the acknowledgment of a foible or an error, such is an offhand pen-portrait of Edward Askew Sothern."

Thus wrote one who knew Sothern in the later years of his life intimately. Will his description, I wonder, convey to those who did not know the actor in private life any idea of what he really was? Oddly worded though some of it is, it is all true enough; and as I am no great believer in "pen-portraits," and certainly could not hope to conjure up with ink and paper the varying expressions on the refined, handsome, and ever-kindly face that I knew so well, I quote it here. Of course the "beautiful white hair" and the "long grey moustache" belonged to the latter period of his career. I knew him when moustache and hair were brown, and when he was the best looking, the best dressed, and the most fascinating man in England. No wonder that people went half crazy about him, or that he became the very idol of London society, and the courted guest of all—from Royalty downwards. If ever a deliberate plot was made to spoil a man, the victim of that plot was Sothern; and the real wonder is that he came out of the ordeal so well. Fêted, petted, and ran after by the highest in the land, he never forgot his friends, and though, as a matter of

expediency, he availed himself of the invitations that were literally showered upon him, his happiest moments, I know, were passed with those who really cared for him, and had his best interests at heart. Sothern, as I have already said, was the comet, not of one, but of many London seasons; and there is no doubt that the whirl of excitement in which he perforce lived, coupled with its inevitable consequences, prematurely produced the white hair, the grey moustache, and the all too early death. But he had his happy days, as those who knew him when he lived in the charming old-fashioned house called "The Cedars," in Wright's Lane, Kensington, will well remember. Revelling in the presence of fulfilled ambition and apparently endless popularity and prosperity, Sothern became an ideal English host, and took keen delight in all the pleasures that his position enabled him to command. Not once, however, did he allow the exacting demands that were now made on every moment of his time to interfere with his duties on the stage. Attributing his hard-earned success to earnestness—to doing everything as well as he

knew how,—to never acting on the impulse of the moment, and to thoroughly understanding what he had to do,—he was ever on the look-out for fresh characters and pieces; and when rehearsals became necessary, he worked as hard and as anxiously as when his very bread depended upon his exertions. The care that he took with his acting was almost rivalled by the extraordinary and minute attention that he paid to the details of his costume when dressing for his parts. Nothing would induce him to have anything of a makeshift character, and on no occasion was he known to appear in public in garments in which he had once been seen on the stage. An infinite capacity for taking pains was certainly comprised in, if it did not wholly constitute, Sothern's genius.

It is certainly wonderful how he could be—as he undoubtedly was—in this over-busy, feverish period of his life, the promptest and most regular of correspondents. Every letter—whether from friend or stranger—that he received was quickly answered; every application that was made to him received some response. Like every actor of

note, he was plagued, almost beyond endurance, by the manuscripts of would-be dramatists. "Great heavens!" he used to say, "every fresh man that I meet has either written a play, or wants to sell wine." And yet, whenever he saw the least hope in the work submitted to him, he was ever full of courtesy, kindliness, and encouragement. "If ever," he wrote to a young author, who had timidly submitted a play to him, "if ever you write a piece that I can squarely and fairly say 'go ahead' with, I'll do my very d—dest to make it a 'hit.' Get to work on it, and I'll nurse it in America and bring it back full grown. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than assisting in a grand success for you—only don't let us make a mistake. Frame out a pretty, simple love story; let *me* tell you where the 'ends of acts' come in (experience alone can smell that); and, above all, be *human* in every word you write. But, 'Oh! it's so easy to advise, and so difficult to do,' say you, and naturally too. It is. Don't write for a star —don't write for *me;* write for a very first-class company, every part A 1 in its class and proportions. All I can add is that I'll put my whole

soul and heart into it, and no one, save you, shall ever know I even suggested. Pull your head together with a plot—simple, natural, true to nature. Love is love all the world over. There is no new way of handling it; but a real, genuine, honest, self-sacrificing love scene would be a 'dead certainty' in its effect on young and old. *Real* hearts beat much alike. We all know that. Thousands of years ago they did—they do now—and ever will. Imagine *yourself* the hero, and *write* as you fancy you would *feel*."

"Get your pieces printed," was a piece of advice that Sothern gave to unacted dramatists of more or less promise. "Tom Robertson," he wrote, "used to get all his plays kept in type, scene by scene. He said he could not judge the effect till he read them in type."

An admirable lesson was conveyed in this way. "Write your pieces in *telegrams*. I mean by that, that all you inexperienced authors write so much too much, and I would have you go through your speeches and sentences from a telegraphic point of view. Here, for example, is a speech that would cost quite half-a-crown to

send along the wires. Just look through it again, and see if, with the same sense conveyed in it, you could not cut it down and send it for a shilling. Overhaul your pieces in this way, and, depend upon it, you will improve them. The public of to-day have got used to telegrams, and prefer them to the polite correspondence of the Richardsonian days."

Sothern carried this theory of his into practice, and was a very strong believer in the efficiency of the use of the theatrical pruning-knife. The last time I saw him act (it was almost the last time that he played on English boards), a singular and almost painful thing occurred, which made him declare most emphatically that audiences cared little or nothing about dialogue, and that the more a piece was "cut" the better would be its chances of success. The play of the evening was "David Garrick." Sothern was so nervous, ill, worried, and unhappy, that (to those who knew it) it seemed almost impossible that he would get through the evening. He did very well, however, carrying the house (and a crowded house it was) with him as usual, until the final act, when,

kneeling by the side of the yielding *Ada Ingot*, *Garrick* had to tell the touching story of his early life, of his parents' objection to his choice of a profession, of his disobedience to their wishes, of his triumph as an actor, and of his never-ending remorse for his mother's broken heart.

"Ada," began poor Sothern, "I had a mother once—I had a mother once;" he then looked vaguely round the house, and, to those who knew him and his then state of health, it was clear that the words had left him. The voice of the prompter was heard; *Ada*, with her averted face half-hidden in her handkerchief, endeavoured to give him the missing lines; but it was of no avail, the words were hopelessly, irretrievably gone. "I had a mother once," he repeated, in the sonorous tones with which playgoers were once so familiar, and then, with a sigh, cutting the Gordian knot, he concluded by giving the final words of the speech, "My mother was dead. Her tears weigh upon me yet." The audience applauded, and, all else going well, "David Garrick" came to its usual brilliant termination. Smoking his after-supper cigar that night,

Sothern asked me if I had noticed the *contretemps*. I could not say no, but, anxious that he should not distress himself about it, I told him that I did not think that it could have been observed by those who were not very familiar with the play. "Observed!" he said; "but I should think it *was* observed! Why, the scene never went so well. It was a chance cut, but it was a good one. 'I had a mother once; my mother is dead.' That is all the public want. They don't care to be troubled about such merely domestic details as Garrick's becoming a famous actor, and drawing a big salary; or with the old lady's inconsistent and uninteresting broken-heartedness. 'I had a mother once; my mother is dead.' That sums up everything; it's all the public require, and it's all, in future, they will ever get from *me* in the last act of 'Garrick.'"

Another young dramatist of my acquaintance sent a three-act comedy to Sothern, which he pronounced by letter to be "extraordinary—absolutely extraordinary," adding, "Come and talk it over with me." The young dramatist did go and talk it over with him, and what took

place at that interview may, perhaps, best be told in dialogue.

Y. D. I am so glad that you have read my play.

Sothern. So am I. I have thoroughly enjoyed it.

Y. D. (*delighted*). That is almost more than I dared to hope.

Sothern. It was a great deal more than *I* dared to hope.

Y. D. You found it original?

Sothern. Absolutely. I never read anything like it——

Y. D. (*thinking his fortune is made*). Really——

Sothern (*interrupting him*). Shall I give you my candid opinion of it act by act?

Y. D. If it would not be too much trouble.

Sothern. None at all. Well, I suppose you mean to commence with the first act?

Y. D. Naturally.

Sothern. Pardon me, I was not quite sure. Of course, I'm not infallible—and—— Well, you're an author, and I'm only an actor, you know. Do you altogether like that first act?

Y. D. Well, I can't say that I'm altogether *satisfied* with it.

Sothern. Of course not. No one would be. I know the experience that you have had in these matters, and directly I read the first act I shook my head and said, "No, no; confound it all! ——, who knows more about plays than I do, can't be satisfied with the first act."

Y. D. (*pleased at the way in which he is being treated*). What a critic you are!

Sothern. Not at all. You dramatists are the real critics. Very well, then; you tell me—in confidence, of course—that you don't like the first act. Good! Then we'll come to the second.

Y. D. (*hopefully*). Yes; what of the second?

Sothern. Not good, is it?

Y. D. (*ruefully*). Isn't it?

Sothern. Well, honestly, *is* it?

Y. D. I suppose not, if you have it so.

Sothern. Pardon me, *you* have it so; it's your play, not mine. Then, as you frankly tell me that you don't like the first act, and consider the second one not good—which means bad—hear my opinion of the third act.

Y. D. (*who feels that the third act is his strongest card*). Yes,—well,—the third act?

Sothern. The third act, my boy, is simply *beastly!*

In the kindness of his heart, Sothern subsequently produced a little play by that young author, giving it, as few others would do, the very finest of chances. "I shall begin," he wrote, when the production was decided upon, "with 'Garrick,' your piece *afterwards*, so that it will have the best place in the Bill. Then I shall wind up with 'A Regular Fix.'" How many overworked men, I wonder, would go to such trouble as this in order to let a novice have a hearing? But Sothern always kept in mind the days of his early struggles, and was ever ready to lend a helping hand to those who were still toiling laboriously, and in many cases hopelessly, on the road to the success that he had won.

Another trait in his character was his hearty admiration of the good work done by his contemporaries on the stage. Of J. B. Buckstone, under whose management at the Haymarket he made his first London appearance, and for so many years acted, he said, "Buckstone must now be about seventy-five years of age; but, old as he is, he gets hold of his audience more rapidly than any one I know. A simple 'good morning' from him seems to set the house in a roar. His personal magnetism is simply wonderful. He acts as if he had strings on all his fingers attached to the audience in front, and plays with them and pulls them about just as he wants." He considered Mrs. Kendal the first and finest actress of the day, and he had a special admiration for the acting of Mrs. Bancroft, speaking of her as being in her own way "the best actress on the English stage—in fact, I might say on *any* stage." He was also enthusiastic concerning the work done by Irving, Toole, Chippendale, Compton, Hare, Lionel Brough, Edward Saker, Edward Terry, Hare, W. Farren, and Kendal. Among the actors of his time, however, he gave the

highest place to David James, whose wonderful transitions from broad low comedy to domestic pathos he could never sufficiently praise. Miss Larkin, too, came in for a full share of his appreciation.

In his early American days he had wilfully kept himself out of an engagement in order that he might see Rachel play her celebrated characters, and he never forgot the lesson that her acting taught him. "There was a fascination about it," he said, "that was almost painful. She had less action than any artist I have ever seen, but she was so intensely in earnest, and her passion was so overwhelming, though subdued, that you lost yourself in wonderment. I learned from her, therefore, that one of the chief elements of whatever success I expected was earnestness, intensity, and thorough identification with every part in which I might be engaged. There is not an audience in the world which will not be quick to detect the sympathy between the actor and his play."

Of Charles Mathews's wonderful talent, which ran in somewhat the same groove as his own, he

naturally held a high opinion. "He was undoubtedly," he said, "the founder of the present school of light comedy, and when he dies I know of no man who will take his place. His force consists in his excessive—well, I may call it his champagny airiness. Even at the present time, when he must be nearly seventy years old, he dashes on the stage with all the lightness and brilliancy of a lad of twenty. I never saw Charles Mathews attempt a serious part, and, in fact, there doesn't seem to be one pathetic tone in his voice. Still, I am sure that he would play a pathetic scene in a perfectly natural manner."

Among the dramatists who wrote for him he had an especial liking for Henry J. Byron—"and so would any one," he said, "who understands the character of the man, and appreciates his extraordinary facility for punning, twisting words inside out, and producing the wittiest of effects. One, however, frequently must read his burlesques before seeing them, in order to understand the nice shading which he employs in his word-painting. As regards his plays when put upon the stage, not one company in a hundred can give

the necessary point to Byron's witticisms without seeming to force them. I know him well, and never met a man in all my travels who more completely 'corruscated' with brilliant thoughts and repartee. A stenographer could almost write an admirable burlesque by taking down what Byron says at his own dinner-table, because his humour is thrown off so easily and naturally. Wit with him is spontaneous, and when in the mood every sentence is an epigram. It is a prevailing impression that Byron writes too rapidly, but, to my certain knowledge, he frequently does not take a pen in hand for weeks at a time. I have often seen him after a chatty dinner-party go to his desk and make a half-dozen memoranda. During that time he probably evolved the skeleton of a play. He never commences a drama wondering how he is going to finish it; the framework is all clear before he puts pen to paper. The beginning and the end of every act are definitely settled; as to the dialogue, that comes to him more naturally than he can scribble. I once asked him why he did not use a shorthand reporter. He replied that the scratching of his quill on the

paper was like music to him! Another thing; he scarcely ever is guilty of an erasure, and when he has once written a piece he has the strongest possible objection to alterations. He rarely goes to see a first night's performance of his own work, and a play once produced seems to lose all interest in his mind, doubtless because it is so quickly succeeded by the plot of the next, which you may be sure he will speedily write. I should say that he has not more than two or three friends in the world whom he regards as intimate associates. In fact, his life is all work, but such pleasant work to him that it never becomes tiresome or monotonous."

Concerning W. S. Gilbert, whom he regarded as "not only one of the shining lights of modern dramatic literature, but an excellent, generous, and high-toned gentleman," he has left the following graceful anecdote: "A short time ago," he said, "I made a proposition to him to write a comedy for me, which he agreed to do for an agreed sum, to be paid on the delivery of the manuscript. I particularly requested him not to make an individual part for me, inasmuch as I

wished to select it myself. The play, when finished, was a beautiful composition; but, after many weeks of thought and reading, I came to the conclusion that the character which Gilbert had evidently created for my own personation was not suited to my style and methods, and I wrote him to that effect. He replied in the most unselfish spirit, expressing his regret that I had not been suited, and at once offering to take back the play. I like to speak of this circumstance, because it is an exceptional instance of large-heartedness on the part of one who might legally and reasonably have enforced his contract."

To those who did not know Sothern intimately it may be somewhat of a surprise to be told that he was intensely fond of the study of theology. Every book upon the subject that he could get he would read with avidity, and he delighted in nothing more than a prolonged discussion on theological matters. He thoroughly disliked creeds, and had a profound contempt for bigotry; but from his readings and discussions he formed religious convictions of his own, which were short, simple, and to the point. "They only," he

would say, with an irresistible twinkle in his blue-grey eyes, "require living up to!" And, in never forgetting the claims of friendship, he lived up to them right manfully.

Although he never, unaided, was the author of a London-produced play, we have seen how he amplified the work of others, and in the few odd moments of his active life he was very fond of using his facile pen. As an example of what he would do in this direction, I may, perhaps, be permitted to quote the following "Rambling Reflections" that appeared in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* of December, 1874:—

"In knocking about the world, here, there, and everywhere, I have sometimes whiled away the tedium of solitary evenings, while 'taking mine ease in mine inn,' by jotting down the rambling reflections that occurred to my mind during my long and lonesome railway journeys. Some of them owe their birth to stray paragraphs of newspapers picked up *en voyage*, others to incidents in my own chequered career, and yet others, I am afraid, to the mere rumble and jumble of the *train*, originating a similar rumble and

jumble in the *brain*. However, be they as they may, good, bad, or indifferent, 'be they spirits of health or goblins damned,' I will adventure them forth on the tide of public opinion, and launch my 'unconsidered trifles' on the stream, as the truant schoolboy sends his paper boat floating whither chance may direct, without compass, helm, or log, and so, '*vogue la galère*.'

"A strong prejudice exists among certain classes of presumably intelligent people against novels, novel-writers, and novel-readers. It is considered a waste of time to read works of fiction—that valuable time that might be so much better employed in minding your business, *i.e.* cheating your neighbours; rational conversation, *i.e.* scandal and gossip; scientific inquiry, *i.e.* having your head felt by Professor Bumptious; and religion, *i.e.* damning everybody's soul who does not belong to your particular church. In former days this prejudice extended to a sort of social ostracism of all who dared to confess the heinous crime of novel-reading; and truly, in these times, there was some shadow of excuse for such severity, for it must be allowed that the

novels of the period, albeit full of wit and invention, were somewhat prurient, to use the mildest term, or what Judge of Roundwood would have called 'bordering on the indel.' Fielding and Smollett have left us lifelike pictures of their times, indeed; but we can scarcely blame the parents of that day for striving to guard the minds of their children from the *cochonnerie* so plentifully scattered over the pages of 'Peregrine Pickle,' 'Tom Jones,' and others of like kidney. The novels that were not naughty were insufferably dull. Witness Richardson's 'Sir Charles Grandison,' a work which we defy any one, however much imbued with respect for the 'classic authors,' to wade through at present; and the 'Evelina' of Miss Burney, which bears about the same relation to a good novel of the present day, in completeness of plot and sparkle of dialogue, as the Marchioness's orange-peel and water does to Perrier and Jouet's dry champagne.

"With the Avatar of Scott all this was changed. A higher tone was infused into the literature of fiction. A choice of comic character, inclining more to the ludicrous than the coarse, to the

eccentric than to the vulgar, took the place of the obscenities that passed for wit and humour with our great-grandfathers. Historical accuracy supplanted loose description, and true local colouring replaced that inclination to dress everybody and everything in Roman costume or else in the ordinary apparel of the time. The statue of Canning as a Roman senator and Garrick playing *Macbeth* in the uniform of the Guards are examples in point. Scott was a scholar and antiquarian. His historical characters are costumed with scrupulous accuracy, and armed according to the fashion of their age; their conversation is modelled on the works of the old writers, unstarched to a colloquial consistency. In reading the romances of the 'Wizard of the North,' we seem to live in the very midst of the people and manners described. Who has not shared the Scottish breakfasts at Tullyveolan, and drank 'pottle deep' from the Bear of Bradwardine? How often have we quailed under the objurgations of Meg Dods, and accompanied the 'daundering' by brae and burn of Edie Ochiltree? It is not too much to say that he who has lovingly

studied the 'Waverley Novels' is an educated man.

"From the era of Scott to the present day, novelists have sought, by every means in their power, of care and research, to make their works faithful pen-pictures of the times and places they profess to describe, so that the reader is transported from scene to scene with the magic celerity of Chaucer's 'Hors of tree.' The whole world is opened to the view; our ideas become gradually cosmopolitan—

> 'No pent-up Utica contracts our powers,
> The whole, the boundless continent is ours.'

German, French, Spanish, Italian, nay, even Russian and Asiatic life become as familiar to us as if we were 'native, and to the manner born.' National prejudices disappear; we come to appreciate the fact that 'the whole world is akin,' and, by consequence, to recognize the universal brotherhood of man. As a natural result, war becomes abhorrent to our feelings; familiarity with the manners and customs of other nations deprives us of that lofty contempt and insolent conceit which are such powerful incentives to aggression,

and we arrive at the conclusion that the eleventh commandment is by far the best, 'Love one another.'

"In good novels of the present day, the reader is brought into close contact, mentally, with all sorts of people, and with all the diseases of the body politic, which he would naturally avoid and shrink from personally. His sympathies are awakened and his charity aroused by the vivid pictures of misery and vice, and his best feelings are called into action responsive to the scenes of refinement and virtue depicted by the graphic pens of close observers. The manners of the higher classes, and the refinement of their language, are rendered available to all, and men may become, aye! have become, finished gentlemen from the careful perusal of good novels, who, otherwise, from lack of opportunity and example, must have remained clowns. The novel-reader, also, lives a multiplied life; he exists not only in his own person, but also in the history of each one of those friends of fancy whose companionship is as real to him as that of the men and women whom he daily meets. Is not Tom

Pinch the bosom friend of every one? Who has not taken Colonel Newcome into his heart of hearts? Verily, I believe that more than railways, steamships, or telegrams—more than gas, or, greatest of modern inventions, lucifer matches!—have novels and novelists aided to advance the higher civilization and to extend the homogeneity of humanity.

"The drama is but an acted novel, and, being *acted*, that is, presented in bodily form and audible speech, appeals even more vividly than mere written description to the masses who have not the faculty of impersonating in their own minds the ideas of others, and to whom *representation* is essential. We wonder what the world would be without the drama to 'hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time its form and presence;' had we no *Othello* to warn us against jealousy, no 'School for Scandal' to ridicule that most fashionable vice, no 'Tartuffe' to gibbet hypocrisy, no *Iago* to put us on our guard against our 'honest' friends? In this material age, and most matter-of-fact

country, the drama, either in its spoken or written form, is almost the sole intellectual element of our civilization: all else is 'Fact, sir! hard fact!' For 'to the general' the influence of poetry, painting, and music is far removed, while the drama is ever present in some form or other. The pulpit is so entirely given over to the exaltation of sect, and dreams of the future life, to the utter neglect of things pertaining to the present existence; deals so exclusively in *post-obits*, in fact, is so thoroughly polemical and retrogressive, that its power as a purifier and guide is almost naught. The press, although, thank Heaven! we can proudly point to the leading papers of England and America as the bulwarks of liberty and the fearless exposers of imposture and incompetence, is still so occupied with the material occurrences of the day and the more weighty affairs of State and commerce that, with the exception of those journals specially devoted to literature and art, it literally has not the space to devote to æsthetic culture as a main object, but is, by the necessity of the case, forced to neglect the lighter subjects; and so the drama is left almost

alone as a refining, elevating, and warning medium to that large majority of the world's inhabitants, whose lack of time, opportunity, or taste for study prohibits any very profound views to originate with themselves, and are therefore fain to accept the opinion of some 'guide, philosopher, and friend,' to mould their crude views of things into shape and consistence. Let us, then, watch that it be not lowered by the prurient taste of the vulgar, or the caprice and vanity of its professors, but lend one and all our best endeavours to raise and purify it as the prop and mainstay of civilization."

It will be surmised from this that Sothern was not only a firm believer in the real good that might be done by the conscientious following of his own profession, but an enthusiastic reader of high-class novels. Nothing, indeed, in the way of romance came amiss to him, and I well remember the eager and boyish delight with which he devoured the wildly improbable but cleverly conceived stories of Jules Verne.

His "Rambling Reflections" were continued as follows :—

"They say 'a straw thrown up, shows how the wind blows,' and the difficulty both in England and America of convicting any one accused of capital crime is but an indication of the gale of popular feeling blowing adverse to judicial murder. People are beginning to see that two wrongs do not make a right, and that to kill one man because he has killed another is but to put yourself in his place and to lower yourself to his level. A great many relics and *exuviæ* of barbarism have descended to us from the old Jewish, Roman, and feudal times, when, as in all savage and semi-civilized tribes and peoples of the present day, vengeance was thought a virtue, and 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' was the *iron* rule which the advance of human thought seeks to displace by the *golden* one, 'Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you;' with but indifferent success, however, as yet, for up to the present time people will go to church and listen reverently to the enunciation of the merciful precept of Him whom they acknowledge as the God of mercy, and afterwards condemn a fellow-creature to the stake, axe, or gallows, with

the greatest complacency and satisfaction, licking their lips the while, and patting themselves on the head as expecting that God of mercy and loving-kindness to welcome each one to the heavenly city, when they pay Him a visit, with 'Well done, good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

"Happily, at last there appears 'a cloud no bigger than a man's hand' rising above the horizon, which may prove to be the harbinger of a plenteous rain. Things are turning round, and people are beginning to see that 'the worst use you can put a man to is to hang him,' while the feeling that it is wrong for a fallible creature to commit an irrevocable act is daily gaining ground. If we kill a man because we, in our weak and easily misled judgment, think that he has committed a murder, we cannot give back the life that we have rashly taken away, even should his innocence afterwards become as clear as the sun at noonday. The irrevocable deed is done past recall, and we, the people who have killed an innocent man, are as much murderers as he who, smarting under real or fancied wrongs, slays his

injurer; whereas, should we upon strong, and to us, convincing evidence, sentence a man to imprisonment for life, and circumstances should in time prove his innocence, we can, at least, restore the remainder of his existence and make what poor atonement may be in our power for the time we have robbed him of. This feeling is the cause of the lenity exhibited by juries in cases of capital crime; it may remain in abeyance in the instance of some professional slaughterer who basely murders for gain; but in any case where the least excuse of passion is available, it starts up like a knight-errant of yore, and throws its protecting shield between the gallows and its victim.

"Do away with the cruel, disgusting halter, and you will do away with forsworn juries and tergiversating judges. In order to make this a safe proceeding to the community, executive clemency should be abolished. Neither king, president, nor governor should have the power to turn a murderer loose upon society at his caprice; the incontrovertible proof of entire innocence should alone justify the opening of the prison doors, and the united voice of the legislative body

be the only means of grace. 'To this complexion we must come at last.' Let us consider for a moment the *material*, so to speak, of our juries. Are they not for the most part composed of stolid, half-educated, or wholly ignorant men of the lower middle-class, whose knowledge of the world is limited to the mere mechanical functions of their trade or calling, and who, even in that, are so *unidea'd*, that if you order anything in the least different from what they have been used to, the least bit out of their groove, you are sure to have your orders totally misunderstood, and the article, whatever it may be, utterly spoiled? Men to whom prejudice stands in the place of reason, who do so and so because their fathers did so before them, and to whom an original thought or a logical deduction is simply an impossibility! And yet to such hands as these we trust a man's life! that mysterious gift which, once taken, we cannot restore—that flame which, once extinguished, we cannot relume—that 'Anima' or breath which, once exhaled, is irrevocably diffused through the eternal void. And the judges! what better are they? Why, not much more than a

hundred years ago the great lights of the law, the legal patriarchs, who are still looked up to as the exponents of British justice, burned old ladies at the stake as witches! (Query, did they believe they were, or were their worships only yielding to public opinion, and roasting ancient dames 'pour encourager les autres'?) Truly, as Stephen Plim says, 'it's aw a muddle,' or, as I say myself, 'it's one of those things that no fella can find out.'

"I should like to come to life again in about five hundred years, and see how they manage things then. But I suppose even then there would be something to growl about, and that, with Don Quixote, that incarnation of reform, we should have 'duelos y quebrantes,' *i.e.* gripes and grumblings, at least once a week."

There was, I think, nothing that Sothern hated so much, or concerning which he would wax so wrathfully eloquent, as capital punishment.

That in the early days of his stage career Sothern had some ambition to become his own dramatist, will be seen by an extract from a letter,

As a further proof of his desire in these days to get away from America and *Dundreary*, and to come to England with a piece after his own heart, I may quote from two letters written in 1859 :—

"New York, January 7, 1859.

"My Howard Athenæum spec. begins on Monday, the 17th inst. Stars, Mrs. Forrest (*i.e.* Sinclair), Mr. and Mrs. Boucicault, Miss Matilda Heron, Miss Vandenhoff. I am leaving no stone unturned to ensure success, but God only knows whether it will turn out well. It will either be a big lump of money, or a dead failure. I'll keep you posted up in the whole affair. This everlasting 'American Cousin' is now in its twelfth week, and doubtless will run all the season. I left Wallack's because Lester and I clashed too much, and I felt a change of locality does good sometimes. I only get sixty dollars here now, but I get two benefits, which brings it to seventy-five dollars. The panic lowered all salaries. If my Boston spec. be a success, you'll see me in Liverpool to a certainty. What the devil do you mean by my getting £5 a week in England?" . . .

"January 21, 1859.

"On the 7th I wrote you a long letter. Since then I have opened the Howard Athenæum, and Mrs. Sinclair's engagement has turned out an utter failure. I shall drop about 1200 dollars on her twelve nights! The whole Boston public are against her. Every one fancied she would be a great card. This is a terrible blow to my English trip, but the Boucicaults, Miss Heron, and Miss Vandenhoff *may* pull it up,—but I doubt if I can clear myself, unless these stars make a big strike! 'Tis very disheartening, and 'tis so bad to open the season with a failure. A few weeks more will settle the point. God grant I may be on the right side. 'Our American Cousin' is running yet (15th week!) and bids fair to go till the 4th of July. 'Tis considered the biggest hit ever made in America!"

And again, in another undated but evidently earlier letter (for *Dundreary* was at last doing for him what his speculations as a manager did not), he says—

"If I can *possibly* raise money enough, you

will see me in England about the first week in September. All depends on the success of my Halifax season. So much do I desire to come, that I am making no engagements for the Fall here. Should Halifax fail, it will stun me; but I've full hopes it will succeed."

The following extracts from his letters to a lifelong friend, and one of his fellow-actors of the Jersey days, are not without interest. They convey some idea of his style as a correspondent, and, almost to the last, the irrepressible buoyancy of his spirits :—

"I send you MS. and parts of a new farce, to be announced as follows :—

A NEW AND ORIGINAL FARCE
BY
THE CELEBRATED AUTHOR OF 'BOX AND COX,'
ENTITLED
'DUNDREARY A FATHER.'

Lord Dundreary	... ...	Mr. Sothern.
Jem Baker	... ...	Mr. Blakeley.
Parker (a Page)	... ...	Call Boy, dressed in buttons.
Nabhem (a Policeman)	...	2nd Low Com.
Mrs. Mountchessington	...	Mrs. Lacy.
Lady Dundreary	... ...	Miss Pateman or Mrs. Smith.
Nurse ...	... ...	2nd Old Woman.
Mrs. Nabhem	... ...	1st Chambermaid.

"We will play it on Tuesday, after 'A Lesson for Life.' It will draw, and only plays thirty minutes. Sefton telegraphed you to announce 'A Lesson for Life,' Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and 'A Favourite of Fortune,' and 'A Little Treasure' (I play *Maidenblush*) for Friday, and 'Garrick' and 'A Little Treasure,' Saturday. 'A Little Treasure' only plays for an hour and a quarter, so you can play a rattling melodrama afterwards."

"Many thanks for your trouble, and for the many jolly days you gave me and my dog 'Tiger' in your stunning little yacht. This is a *grand* audience! They literally *howl* with laughter; but it's very stupid in a hotel all by myself. Glad your *Othello* knocked 'em silly. Did you collar any of Salvini's points?

DID
you
CUT YOUR
THROAT?"

"*I* consider I play *Claude Melnotte* d—d badly; but others don't, so I don't dispute the point."

"What fishing tackle shall we bring down? I would suggest a regular dinner-hour, and club together for the cost. I *never* was so snug and comfortable as I was when we three lodged together, and your dear wife was so thoughtful and kind. Long life to the OLD TIMES, say I!"

"S.S. *Adriatic.*

"Here we are at Queenstown. So far a lovely passage. Saker is now in irons, fastened to the scuppers. Manning is at the wheel, and we've only had five collisions. In fact, we quite miss them if they don't occur every hour or so. It's now half-past eleven a.m., and I have polished off four breakfasts. Mrs. Saker is hauling up the Union Jack in the mizzen-top, and Manning, in a fit of absence of mind, has just upset a lighthouse; but no one seems annoyed. We have just knocked our keel off. Seven hundred and fifty emigrants all in handcuffs,—one man floating on the keel.

"Ever yours,

"E. A. S.

"P.S.—Boiler just burst!!!"

"As far as money goes, it's not worth my while returning to England. My position here (in America) is stronger than ever it was, and 'The Crushed' is a five-act HOWLER! It has acknowledgedly walked clean over *Dundreary's* head. I have reconstructed the piece, and in many ways strengthened my part. Dear old Tiger died on my breast on my way to Canada. I miss him more than I can convey. He *knew* he was dying."

"My eight weeks' New York engagement was a big 'go.' Now I'm at Boston for four weeks. Then I go to Brooklyn, and again play in New York, at the Grand Opera House, for three weeks, 'on a certainty' of $10,500, *i.e.* £2500. Not so 'dusty' for a poor wandering stroller, eh? I am as well as ever; but I *still* move the stage chairs and tables about (!), and worry property men. Don't engage me for ——, except for your benefit. *Then* my terms will be awful!—*i.e.* nothing!—but *one cigar!* Be sure to remember me most kindly to ——. Were it not for two or three like him, I'd never play in England

again,—that is to say, as far as 'money' goes; but the said money is not *all* in this world, thank God!"

"I have written to Clarke. His fear is that a preliminary performance of 'The Crushed' in Birmingham may take the gloss off my London appearance, and that the Birmingham critics may cut me up. I can't accept that view, for the Birmingham critics have ever been most generous in their opinions of my acting, though they have once or twice d——d the pieces; and they were *right!*"

"I've taken most comfortable lodgings in Brighton, where no loafing outsiders can coolly walk in and stare at me. The doctors say I'm better, and possibly I am a little; but I'm very weak and ill, and another week will decide if I play next season or not. The amount of tissue that I have lost is startling. I am all but a skeleton."

"Thank you for your note. Don't make any

mistake. I *never* lose my spirits unless I am so utterly low that I *can't* joke and laugh. I am really and dangerously ill, so weak that I can't walk over a few yards. My own feelings tell me far more than any doctor could do. I couldn't have got as far as Yarmouth. I did the only thing that could be done,—that is, put myself under treatment at once, — and even at that I fear it was too late. I can scarcely walk. I am afraid that I must cancel all my American engagements,—a tremendous loss! I was struck down as if by lightning. I never *was* so staggered!"

Here, too, are characteristic letters written in his later days to his earliest and life-long American friend, Mrs. Vincent :—

"LOVELY ONE,

"Was it four we fixed for the dinner hour? Shall I expect the same little party as we were last night? I hope so.

"Ever yours,

"NED."

"DEAR LITTLE NICE PERSON,

"Why the —— didn't you reply to my letter? *Do* come and see me. Eh? Will you? Wire 'yes,' and a carriage will meet you. If you don't answer *this* letter, we are mortal

FOES

for

LIFE!!!

"Lovingly yours,

"NED.

P.S.—"I've got some nice birds (lovely pets) for you. If you don't come, I'll have them *boiled!*

"EDWARD."

"BEAUTIFUL SINNER!

"Good! We will be with you to-night about 11.15.

"Thine,

"S."

"BEAUTIFUL STALACTITE!

"Do not forget that you and Smith quietly feed with me at three o'clock to-day. 'The

banquet' will be on the festive board precisely at 3.15.

Wilkie Collins is coming purposely to meet you.

"Yours cringingly,

"E. A. SOTHERN."

When serious, and, as it afterwards proved, fatal, illness struck him down, and he was compelled to give up his professional engagements, and was almost dragged away to the Continent, he wrote as follows to a dear friend:—

"'Here we R,' as the clown says, and which, in the present instance, means, 'Here we R' at Cannes. Weather lovely and warm; but, oh! hasn't it been cold and disagreeable coming so far! However, now we are here, we are going to enjoy ourselves! I'm decidedly better, but I feel this *enforced* rest as though I were handcuffed. I hate being *made* to do anything. Am I a mule? I would have called on you when in London, but I was really too 'down in my boots' to call anywhere. This is my first real illness, and it cuts rather deeply into my spirits. I feel 'Chained to the Oar,' as Byron's play has it."

A little on, and at Rome, the wonderfully elastic spirits had revived, and the worn-out man wrote—

"This is such a wilderness of art and beauty! Until I saw St. Peter's to-day I never saw anything of which the *comic* side didn't strike me first. Mind cannot conceive anything so bewilderingly grand! My pen feels sick when I attempt to even name its splendid vastness. *See it*, and you'll understand my feelings and thoughts.

"The Colosseum! I saw it yesterday. Although it held nearly 100,000 people, its proportions are so exquisite that you would almost believe you could produce a neat comedy in its centre; and the circumference is nearly a third of a mile! What a city it *must* have been! A perfect shower of art treasures bewilders the eye each minute. Rome is a place to live and die in. It utterly *swamps* all little conceit and pride. One goes to bed breathing the atmosphere of immortal genius. There! You'll think I'm idiotically wild about the 'Eternal City.' Good! Go on under that impression until you see it yourself,—and then

your wonder will be that my wretched quill didn't scribble for ever and *ever!*"

Very refreshing to him were the repeated voyages that he took across the Atlantic. His thorough enjoyment of them will be gathered from the following extract from a letter written in characteristic fashion on October 9, 1871:—

"Here we are on the gay and festive billow! Wife a little, *very* little sick—Lytton ditto—Miss Roselle a shade more so—

I

NOT AT ALL!!!

Get up at eight. Bed at nine. That's your sort! and never better in my

LIFE!

A splendid boat, and ditto passage. We expect to get to New York by Monday next, *i.e.* this day week. This will be posted the day we arrive. Food comes! so I shut up.

* * * * *

"October 18, New York.

"Here we are. Not sick all the voyage! Not one hour! Think of that!"

How well in the bright *Dundreary* and

Garrick days his handsome face was everywhere known and recognized will be seen by the following anecdote. At the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, he was fulfilling an engagement while the Michaelmas Onion Fair was being held. In those days, travelling theatres of the Richardson, and Bennett and Patch type, together with shows of all descriptions, were allowed in the busiest part of the town, and, attracted by the curious, bustling, noisy, and by no means unpleasing scene, Sothern was soon in its midst. Having a fancy to visit one of the penny theatres, and not anticipating recognition, he went up the steps leading to the platform on which, until a sufficient number to form an audience had been gathered together, the fantastically costumed performers paraded; but, just as he tendered the modest entrance-fee, the proprietor of the establishment stepped forward, and said, "Pardon me, Mr. Sothern, but we could not think of charging *the profession!*" Inside the booth it was touchingly curious to notice how these poor mouthing players acted "at" the theatrical idol of the day, and how pleased they seemed when he

good-naturedly and unrestrainedly applauded their melancholy efforts. It is perhaps needless to add that at the conclusion of the performance the delighted company had ample opportunity for drinking *Lord Dundreary's* health.

Sothern had a wonderful power of winning the affection of men. At the hospitable table of Henry Irving I once met the American tragedian, the late John McCullough. Turning to me in the course of the evening, he said, "I am told you are intimate with Ned Sothern," and when I replied "Yes," he said, as if it were a matter of course, "Then you love him."

And that, of all men who "off the stage" really knew him well, was true.

CHAPTER III.

SOTHERN IN THE HUNTING-FIELD.

During the long runs of the successful Haymarket plays, when, no rehearsals being necessary, Sothern had what was for a being of his enthusiastic temperament superabundant time upon his hands, outlets were required for his extraordinary flow of animal life and spirits. These took many forms, and in its turn fox-hunting occupied much of his time and attention; indeed, he took to the sport dear to the hearts of most English gentlemen with a zeal that was absolutely intense. Endowed as he was in those days with an iron nerve, a splendid physique, and abundant means, the hunting-field became as much a part of his life as was the stage, and in it he probably enjoyed some of the happiest hours of his restless, eager life. It was difficult, of course, to hunt three or

four days in the week, and to appear every evening on the stage, and it is not unlikely that the immense strain upon his resources that at this time he voluntarily put upon himself shortened his days; but he loved his horses and the music of the hounds; he could not disappoint himself; and he never, whatever the cost might be, disappointed the public.

He attributed his remarkable immunity from misadventure, which might have interfered with his performances, to the extreme care with which he gave instructions to his grooms and coachmen as to the times and places at which they were to meet him. He invariably gave each man his directions in writing, so that there could be no mistake, and he exacted from all his servants the most implicit obedience to orders. In this way his plans were carefully made, and as carefully carried out.

Notwithstanding these elaborate precautions, mistakes were sometimes very nearly made. One day that he was out with the Surrey Stag Hounds, he had a very narrow escape of missing his performance at the Haymarket. Owing to the

bearing date January 10, 1861, that he wrote from New York :—

"As for myself, I have (in acting) much improved since we parted, and I have been educating myself for London. When I do make my appearance there it will be in *one of my own* pieces. I have now written four pieces—two six acts, and two five acts. First, an adaptation of Octave Feuillet's French novel, 'The Romance of a Poor Young Man;' second, 'Buffalo;' third, 'Suspense;' fourth, 'Redemption,' founded on a piece now making a sensation in Paris. I have also two more in hand. I often write all night when I am in the humour. I feel *sure* of my success in 'Suspense' in London. In every city I open in that part, and *invariably* carry all before me. I write to an old friend, else I would not pen so egotistical a letter; but I know all news of my progress pleases and interests you. I have not printed anything yet, nor shall I till I have played out their novelty."

It was not until long after he came to London that Sothern required a new play, and then, as we have seen, he put these pieces of his own

upon the shelf, and wisely entrusted himself to the experienced and popular pens of such dramatists as Tom Robertson, Tom Taylor, John Oxenford, Watts Phillips, and Westland Marston. It is interesting, however, to note that Sothern had himself written a play on the subject of "The Hero of Romance," with which the last-named author had supplied him. In his pleasant memoirs, Mr. Bancroft records how, when he was a member of the stock company at Dublin, in the heyday of *Dundreary's* success, Sothern, "afflicted with the mania that his true vocation was that of a serious actor," unsuccessfully revived a powerful but gloomy play called "Retribution," which was originally acted at the Olympic by Alfred Wigan, George Vining, and Miss Herbert. Sothern played *Count Priuli*, Mr. Bancroft was *Oscar de Beaupré*,—and there is reason to believe that this was another of the dramas that the young actor had previously adapted for his own use in America. The connection between Sothern and Robertson dated as far back as the days when, as "Douglas Stuart," the actor was a member of the Wolverhampton stock company, and when a

piece (there is some evidence to show that it was a crude and early version of "David Garrick") was rehearsed under the superintendence of the young dramatist. Mr. William Rignold, the well-known actor, was then the conductor of the orchestra of *five* (!), and well remembers the occasion, though (conductors have to sit through so many pieces!) he cannot be quite certain as to the play. That Sothern wrote these plays of his in stormy times, will be gathered by a further extract from the letter from which I have quoted:—

"Times are fearful here," he wrote; "civil war sure, and next time you hear from me I may be writing with a pen in one hand and a blunderbuss in the other! But, joking apart, affairs here are in a terrible state, and revolution is inevitable. Next Monday I open for two nights at Philadelphia—the 'Walnut;' thence to Washington, and afterwards to Baltimore; but before my Philadelphia engagement is through it's more than possible that Washington may be a mass of burning ruins. In May I'm sure to come to England, if not before. Don't make any engagement

for me. I prefer landing clear, then I can see how the land lies. The theatres are closing up here right and left. Washington and Baltimore are keeping open now solely for my engagement, in the hope that I may pull up business."

In an old scrap-book that, during the struggling American days, Sothern, with characteristic method, kept, there is an advertised outline of the play called "Suspense," which, in good old-fashioned style, runs as follows :—

"BENEFIT AND LAST APPEARANCE BUT ONE OF MR. SOTHERN.

THIS EVENING, SEPT. 28, 1860,

WILL BE PRESENTED

MR. SOTHERN'S NEW FIVE-ACT DRAMA,

ENTITLED

SUSPENSE.

Jules D'Alber ... ... MR. SOTHERN.

"SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY AND INCIDENTS.

"ACT I.—The story of Jules' courtship—Marie's dislike to a country life—'This sea always

the same!'—Entrance of Jules D'Alber—Her husband—Jules' dream—'A fairy vessel, with sails of white satin and silver cords'—A speculation—A rapid fortune—'You shall have your castle, believe me!'—The whistle—The gallant Henri—The arrival of the bonnet—The wager—Ten bonnets against one kiss—Entry of the crew and their tribes—Away to the christening—Michael's description of his lady love—'She can lift a barrel of cider'—His resolve to accompany Jules on the voyage—Return of the party after the christening of the schooner—Song and chorus—Drink to the crew—They weigh anchor in twenty minutes—The voyage begins—'The sailor knows not if he may ever return'—The parting—The letter explaining all—'Farewell! God bless you all! Farewell!'—Now to sea—Marie's distress—Henri's treachery—'I can give it her to-morrow'—His sudden jealousy of Antoine—Alone! alone!—Lapse of twelve months.

"ACT II. *New Scene.*—Antoine's house and garden—Packing up—The arrival of a Parisian friend—Treatise on love—The omnibus—Marie!—Check and counter-check—The watch-dog—

'I must muzzle him'—Octave tired of the horse-pond—'She loves me'—La Dumond—The old nurse—'Ha! another watch-dog.'

"ACT III. *New Scene.*—Room in D'Alber's house—Night—Octave's first effort as confidant—His first love—'At a baker's'—The silk window—Henri's jealousy and disinterested advice—The storm at sea—Malapropos visit of Antoine—The temptation—Trials of love—The rivals—The quarrel—'Hark! it is my husband!'—Jules' sudden return in the midnight storm, after a twelvemonth's absence—The painful reception—Joy and sorrow—The invitation—'Remember to-morrow'—La Dumond's determination to reveal all to her master—The love-letter a silk window—'Let me not think, or I shall go mad'—'My poor master, I have much to tell you'—'Speak! I am prepared for all.'

"ACT IV. *Scene*—Jules' house—Morning—'My wife—My friend—Let me not forget 'tis with them I love to deal'—The crew's present—The breakfast—The story of Henri's life saved in a shipwreck of Jules'—Taunts and insults—'Let us smoke in the garden'—The duel arranged—The

seconds—Jules' instructions to Henri with the sabre—'May your success in this encounter be equal to your loyalty and trust'—Now engaged! —'Are you afraid?—I cannot afford to love you yet.'

"ACT V. *Scene*—Jules' house—Night—The letter—Confession and flight—Abrupt arrival of Jules D'Alber—The treasures of jewels and gold —Remembrance—The fairy has returned to her home—'What are you looking at so earnestly, Marie?'—Ten o'clock—The hour is past—'Too late! too late!'—'Did I not know your love, your loyalty, and trust, I should imagine that you contemplated treachery, Marie!'—'Nay, I swear' —'You lie, perjured woman, you lie!'—The cries of those dying in agony of soul, as well as body, borne on the wind—Death! ruin! misery! the reward of treachery—Sailors' chorus and departure —Mighty Octave! receive once more in thy bosom thy deceived and heart-broken son; henceforth thou art my only country, my only home—France, farewell, for ever!—Alone! alone!"

Surely, when Sothern talked of commencing his much-coveted London career in a play of this

type, his expectation was that he would star at the Adelphi rather than at the Haymarket; and yet throughout this preposterous melodramatic synopsis of a piece in which, no doubt, the actor-author thoroughly enjoyed himself, one can trace the humour of the destined *Lord Dundreary*. The "old nurse" of the second act was very possibly an ancestress of the ancient domestic who was responsible for the infant training of *Brother Sam;* and it is easy to believe that "another watch-dog" was the progenitor of the famous animal that was strong enough to wag his own tail. Be this as it may, it is certain that while Sothern loved playing the hero of pieces of the "Suspense" description, he was always most keenly alive to the absurdities of the situations in which he on these occasions found himself.

There are other things in this old scrap-book that, although they deal with Sothern as an actor, may (inasmuch as they show the records of his early days that he cared to keep) be appropriately quoted in my "Off the Stage" chapter. There are criticisms, good, bad, and indifferent, on his acting as *Count Priuli*, in

"Retribution;" *Puff; Felix Featherley*, in Stirling Coyne's comedy, "Everybody's Friend;" and the hero of "The Marble Heart." Concerning the last-named performance, a critic wrote, "The opening scene, indicating 'a dream,' typical of an artist sculptor's studio at Athens, gives to view the statues of Alcibiades, Gorgos, Diogenes, the three Graces, with the loving slave Thea, and Phidias (who foreshadow Marie and Raphael in the reality or sequel). This scene was altogether wrongly represented, and always has been so in this country, but we never witnessed the absurdity before of putting the fond Phidias in Roman costume. Mr. Sothern made him up in a Roman shirt, Roman sandals, and Roman armour sleeves. Ye Grecian gods! well may you have looked so sorrowful at the absence of the Athenian tunic and conthurni! In fact, Mr. Sothern reminded us more of his *Jason* in the tragedy of 'Medea,' or an insane gladiator who has been mesmerised, than a Grecian." There are many interesting allusions to his performance as *The Kinchin* in "The Flowers of the Forest," which was evidently a very popular one (remarkable in its disguise, and

admirable in its *minutiæ*) in America, and which he played after as well as before his *Dundreary* success; and there is a little before-the-curtain speech in connection with the last-named impersonation that is well worth recording. It was at Albany that, having responded to an enthusiastic call, Sothern said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I hardly think it customary to make a speech on the first evening of a performance, such things being generally kept in reserve until the evening of a benefit. But since you have insisted upon it, I must heartily thank you for your attention and laughter at one of the most absurd performances ever seen on the stage. I have endeavoured to make *Lord Dundreary* a caricature—a burlesque of the broadest type, upon the silly and contemptible fops we everywhere meet. If I have done so to your satisfaction I am satisfied. I have to ask, however, that you will not judge of my merits by the performance—it is absolutely too silly. I trust, however, before the close of my engagement, to appear before you in parts of some merit, when I hope to give you an opportunity to judge of my abilities."

Poor Sothern! How great must his mortification have been when he found that the inane *Dundreary* absolutely ruined the budding prospects of the gallant hero of "Suspense."

And yet, as I have hinted, there is no doubt that all the time that he was with the most energetic earnestness playing these ideal parts, he had an eye on the ludicrous and burlesque side of them. In proof of this, this very scrap-book shows that while he was revelling in his own version of "The Romance of a Poor Young Man" ("The Hero of Romance" of subsequent Haymarket days), he would from time to time appear in what he called the "farcical tragedy" of "The Romance of a Very Poor Young Oysterman."

This venerable collection of newspaper cuttings contains, from a New Orleans journal, the following somewhat odd account of the origin of Tom Taylor's play, "Our American Cousin":—

"During the years 1850–51, when the 'World's Fair' in the 'Crystal Palace,' on the banks of the 'Serpentine,' in Hyde Park, London, was the great attraction to the wonder-loving, the United States were better and more numerously repre-

sented by people than any other country. In the current twelve months it is estimated fifty thousand Americans visited the great metropolis of England, and we all remember the *furore* some of our Yankees created. Hobbs' locks were placed on the doors of the Lord Chamberlain's offices; Colt's revolvers were in the holsters of every British cavalry officer; Connecticut baby-jumpers were in the royal nursery; and Massachusetts patent back-acting, self-adjusting, rotary motion, open-and-shut mouse-traps were the terror of even aristocratic rats. Lord John Russell 'guessed' and 'calculated' on the 'Papal Aggression Bill;' Palmerston and Disraeli 'whittled,' one on, the other around the Woolsack; and through the columns of the elegantly worded Court Circular, we learned that at a particular fraction of an hour, on a particular day of the week, her most gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, aided by the Royal Consort, His Highness Prince Albert, together with the whole royal family, indulged in three half-pints of 'pea-nuts' and four and the two-sixteenths of our genuine 'pumpkin-pies;' while Cardinal Wiseman and the Bishop of

London were seen playing 'poker' over two stiff 'Bourbon whisky-slings;' in a word, everything was Yankee with the cockneys, who pronounced their cousin the only individual elevated to an equal capacity with the titillating, pulverized particles of the tobacco-plant—in other words, 'up to snuff.' This state of things naturally caught the attention of the dramatic world, and a comedian of the Yankee school, named Josiah Silsby, visited London, where and when Tom Taylor, the facetiously called 'author,' immediately brought his 'adaptation' pen to work and produced 'Our American Cousin,' in which Mr. Silsby was to play at the Adelphi Theatre the then leading character of *Asa Trenchard*. To Mr. Ben Webster, the lessee of the Adelphi, this play was sold by Tom Taylor for the sum of £80. Mr. Webster held it in his study, and on reconsideration, as the year 1851 was coming to a close, and the Yankee mania was dying away, declined putting the piece on the stage, and by way of a compensation and consideration to Silsby for breaking up the unexpired engagement between them, and a desire to have Madame Celeste

as a 'star' at the Adelphi, he (Mr. Webster) made Silsby a present of the manuscript of the play of 'Our American Cousin.' On reading it, Silsby came to the conclusion that it was an ineffective piece, and placed it 'on the shelf' until his return to America, when he rehearsed it in California. Again it was doomed to the shelf without the public getting a view of it.

"Years passed, and in the meantime Tom Taylor, thinking because Silsby died that 'Our American Cousin' was a manuscript in the basket of oblivion and 'rejected addresses,' and having a copy of it, placed the same in his New York agent's hands, who in due course sold it to Laura Keene for a thousand dollars. On the production of the piece for the first time, Mrs. Silsby, the widow of the comedian, remembering the name and the various characters, having been present at the rehearsal in California, searched over the old papers of her late husband, and then found the original manuscript, with the following superscription in Josiah Silsby's own handwriting, 'Our American Cousin, by Tom Taylor. From B. Webster to J. Silsby.' The subject coming

to the ears of Messrs. Wheatley and Clarke, the managers of the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, they bought the original manuscript from Mrs. Silsby, and commenced rendering the play, when a lawsuit was instituted between themselves and Miss Laura Keene, in which some interesting evidence was elicited, but none that sustained the Philadelphia managers in their case against the shrewd and wily Laura. The piece, from its first night at Laura Keene's to the time of its withdrawal, was wonderfully attractive, and though played in every city of the Union since, has not been successful as a 'run,' save in such cities as a short distance made it convenient for the imitators to visit, watch, and study the original performers. For instance, from Boston F. L. Davenport and Chanfrau, J. A. Smith and Warren, and from Philadelphia, Wheatley and Clarke, visited Laura Keene's in New York, and repeatedly studiously witnessed every movement, every 'gag' or stage tact, and the entire affair was secretly taken down in shorthand by hired stenographers for these gentlemen. Hence, in only those cities has the piece been

well rendered, and though the public have seen it already here, many have yet to see it more complete with its three original characters, and its chief one, *Lord Dundreary*. So much for the history of 'Our American Cousin.'"

If the history be a true one, it would then appear that when, in 1851, Charles Kean prophesied that Sothern would one day work his way in London, the piece in which his first great success was to be achieved was already written, and in the possession of Benjamin Webster.

The book also gives a record of a benefit performance in which "Messrs. Jefferson and Sothern were immensely funny 'in *Box* and *Cox*,' paraphrasing the points of the piece in the most unblushing manner to suit the circumstances of their own professional associations. For instance, instead of *Box* asking *Cox* if he had 'a strawberry mark on his left arm,' and, after receiving a negative answer, exclaiming, 'Then you are my long-lost brother!' Mr. Sothern said, 'You have the mark of a thneeze on your left arm?' 'No,' replied Mr. Jefferson. 'Then,' cried Mr. Sothern, 'you are my long-lost American cousin!'"

non-arrival of the train at the station where he expected to meet it, he was compelled to ride across country to a junction, and there telegraph for a special engine, which, after some delay, was obtained. By bribing the driver, he induced him to out-run an express train which was on their heels, and got into town, and to the theatre, just as the hour for raising the curtain had struck; but, by pulling a pair of "Dundreary" trousers over his hunting-breeches, and hastening his other preparations, he was able to respond to the summons of the call-boy when it came.

What a strain must this sort of thing have been, even upon his wonderful constitution! No rest, no meal, the excitement of the saddle, and the anxious journey to town exchanged for the exacting drolleries of *Dundreary*, the vociferous applause of a crowded audience, and a subsequent supper with anxious-to-be-amused, "good-natured" friends. Early the next morning, however, Sothern would be off to the nearest—or, as the whim might strike him—the furthest, hunting fixture.

In those days Buckstone, who had the greatest

contempt for this peculiar form of eccentricity, and who had made up his mind that Sothern must sooner or later either break his neck or fail to put in an appearance at the right moment, had always one of the old comedies ready to put upon the stage (after a few words of apology) at an instant's notice. He was never on Sothern's account, however, called upon to change his bill. The exhausted, and often half-famished fox-hunter always—by hook or by crook—managed to make his stage entrance at his exact time.

His love of the sport, and his fondness for the horses that were his sharers in it, will, perhaps, be best exemplified by some extracts from the letters which at that period he regularly wrote to an equally enthusiastic fox-hunting friend. Almost at random I take from them as follows :—

"I was riding my brown mare, 'Kate,' and she carried me magnificently. T—— is right about the post and rails. They were so stiff and high that several men shouted at me not to go at them (remember, we had been going nearly an hour!); but this nigger's blood was up, and over we spun, 'Kate' clearing them in lovely style,

only four in the whole field following. Five minutes more, and a check, and then all's over. I've a nasty sore throat, and I can't hunt to-day, nor yet to-morrow, I fear. Too bad! So near the wind-up of the season! Remember, I expect you to finish up with the Queen's."

"As you did not turn up, I went with Heathcote's instead of the drag, and we had a splendid day. I had to leave 'Kate' behind at Leatherhead, and got to the theatre just in time to go on! To-day I have been studying hard since nine ('tis now four), and to-morrow I go with the Queen's. B—— rides the seventeen-hander to-morrow, with the Prince's Harriers, for an eighteen-stone man to see. I bought him to sell, so of course I *shall* sell. 'Kate' and 'Blazes' can do all my work. Do you know a £150 or £200 man who wants a fast, perfect hunter *and* hack, no fault, no vice, a non-refuser, and clever over *every* kind of fence?"

"Such a day, yesterday, with Heathcote's stag-hounds! Three-quarters of an hour—no

road—without a check! Fifteen minutes, and away we go again! I went seventeen miles, and then came to grief in a big ditch, which threw me out. I never saw dogs go such a blazing pace. We were ten minutes behind them towards the end of the run."

"A good average day with the Queen's to-day. If all right I shall hunt in Leicestershire Monday and Tuesday. Is Wednesday's meet a good one with the Warwickshire, or North Warwickshire? If so I might come to Birmingham and hunt. All depends how I am. I enjoyed my day to-day, but the fences *did* look BIG!"

"'Topsy' is nearly fourteen years old—no, not so much,—she was rising seven when I got her, and I've had her six years. She's never known a day's illness, and in single or double harness is simply perfect; but her action is too corky and rolling for the saddle, though I rode her for more than a year. She has no vice, and is as gentle as a child. I gave either £160 or £140 for her and another horse. I bought her of ——,

the horse-dealer, who can tell you all about her. I *believe* she is perfectly sound, and, with care, good for another thirteen years. £100 for the two is the very lowest figure I would take, and they are worth every halfpenny of it. Go and try them, have them examined, drive them yourself, and I don't care a straw whether you have them or not! There! That's business!"

"I arrive" (this was a telegram dated September 14, and referring, of course, to cub-hunting) "at five past one, and go direct to the theatre. Two charming runs this morning."

Then follows a memorandum in his friend's handwriting: "Received at 10.45 a.m. Sothern was hunting at 5 a.m. with the Duke of Beaufort's Hounds at Badminton. He arrived in Birmingham at 1.5 p.m., rehearsed for three hours, dined with me, and was ready for acting at 7 p.m. Not a bad day's work!"

"We had a poor day of it yesterday, but still we had lots of fencing. I had a nice opportunity on 'Blazes' of pounding the huntsman, who looked so crestfallen that I gave him a sovereign

as a sop. After this little incident the various short runs consisted of the huntsman's trying to pound *me!* Consequently, we had it entirely to ourselves all day, and he picked out the damnedest, baulkingest, biggest (I never could spell that word, and I'm not sure whether there oughtn't to be two or three more 'g's' in it!) fences he could find. He rode a grey thoroughbred, and he and 'Blazes' had a lively time of it! To-morrow I go with the Queen's, but a bad country, near Uxbridge. I'm game for Wednesday, or any other day this week, with the North Warwickshire or the Pytchley."

"By invitation of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, I went to Victoria Station this morning" (the Prince, by the way, frequently sent for him to go down to the meets in his royal carriage) "to accompany him in his 'special' to Horley; but the infernal snow stopped us, and here I am at the Cedars again as cross as a bear! I'd a grand day on Saturday with Heathcote's. Had to take a 'special' myself from East Grinstead to Clapham Junction. Got to Richmond 7.10, on the stage 7.30.

"I had a clinking run yesterday, and as fast as any I ever was in. I rode a powerful six or seven year old brown Irish horse, up to fifteen stone, beautifully temperate, a lovely hack, so corky;—A 1 action, fast enough for any hounds (carried me amongst the first half-dozen all the run), and a bold, grand fencer. Steady in single and double. He's been very neatly fired over the curb bones, but is as sound as a bell. I was awfully tempted to buy him, but I have already too many."

"'The Fenian' is a Belfast horse, and has won several second-class Irish steeplechases. His temper was against him, but all I can say is, I never rode a better-mannered animal. He is a shade too fast at his fences, but does not rush. Indeed, he is so good that I dread finding out some idiotic peculiarities in him that he is keeping in the background to surprise me with some fine day. 'Norah' I bought at auction in Liverpool. I sprained 'Kate's' back in a brook nine feet deep. We simply *disappeared!* In her struggle to get out she hurt her back, and I fear I can't hunt her

for weeks, if ever; but she's all right for double harness. It's a sad blow, for I am so fond of her; but 'The Fenian' can run rings round her. Whether he can fence as cleanly remains to be seen. I daren't hope for it, for 'Kate' was the cleanest, safest fencer I ever sat. Alas! alas!"

"Up to my eyes in study and rehearsals, but managed a day with the Queen's yesterday. We'd an awfully bad run. I rode my new horse, 'The Fenian,' and a friend rode my new mare, 'Norah.' They both went grandly. As for 'The Fenian,' he's the best mover I ever was on—handsomer than 'Blazes,' and much faster. Coming from a stone-wall country, the banks and ditches seemed to puzzle him a little. Some he calmly took in a tremendous stride. Hedges he ignored, and went bang *through* them. A rattling fall or two will cure him of that fancy. I was cautioned, 'Mind he doesn't unseat you with his tremendous bounds.' On the contrary, he never even moved me in the saddle; charmingly elastic, but so beautifully smooth in his action. He's up to fourteen stone and close on thoroughbred. He

blistered my groom's hands all over when merely exercising him, and it only proves how they ruin horses' mouths, for when he found he could play with his bit, and wasn't going to be worried, a child could have held him. He's worth £200 (steady in single and double). I gave £50!!! Why? He's not every one's animal."

In truth, Sothern's animals (for in those days he would ride *anything*) were not every one's animals, and, like all really ardent sportsmen, he delighted in thinking that he had "picked up for an old song" a valuable horse, that less adventurous men would hesitate to mount. Here is an account of a hunter of this description that rejoiced in the name of "Spots":—

"I lunched to-day with a swell hunting-man, who does the Duke of Beaufort's regularly; went to look at his horses, etc. I asked him if he knew 'Spots.' He replied, 'Rather, considering I've been after him for two seasons.'"

S. What's his character?

The other. The best animal in the country—temperate, but bold and very fast.

S. Why didn't you buy him?

The other. Baillie wanted £300 for him.

S. Is he worth it?

The other. Every penny; but it's over my figure.

S. I've bought him!

The other. The devil you have!

S. (*Nods*).

The other. Well, I'm d—d! How on earth did you get him?

S. (*Explains—and price, etc.*).

The other. Well, I can't account for his not selling him to some of our men. He's losing his nerve, and "Spots" was getting too much for him, temperate as he is. You've got a treasure, and if you don't like him, send him here.

"As to nags, the only one you've not seen, I think, is 'Limerick.' Powell of Market Harboro' gave 280 guineas for him last season. Williams, the vet., bought him at Tat's on spec., and let me have him for £60. The cause of his sale was a jarred leg. I had him fired, and he is now as sound as a bell, and simply a perfect model,—decidedly the most perfectly shaped horse *I* ever had. A very dark brown, close on thoroughbred; up to fourteen stone; a long, low 'un; magnificent shoulders, and hips at an enormous angle; and these two points meet so close that a saddle covers nearly all his back,—and still he's a long horse! Six-feet-two girth, and from his knee to his fetlock joint is just a hand's span!

Powell says he was one of his very best horses. In June I shall begin to exercise him in double harness, and thus get him into condition without putting weight on his back till September, when I believe he'll prove a '300 guinear.'"

"I am going to sell 'Grasshopper' and 'Topsy,' my two carriage horses, because I cannot hunt either of them; and, for the future, I will have nothing but thoroughly useful horses. I shall then have Chapman's two horses, and 'Kate,' and the grey, *i.e.* four carriage horses, *or* hunters, *or* hacks, and NO MORE!! I've only one neck, and I've determined to have four good ones."

"If he only strikes on the fetlock joint—I mean, if the blow is confined to a small place—there is nothing like an india-rubber ring to hang loosely over the fetlock joint. If he hits a space of three or four inches, a ring would be useless, and a cloth boot with a leather side-piece and four little buckles is your game. But if it's the hind fetlock, the enclosed is the best pattern, as it never turns, which is a great point. The

leather should be moulded into the shape of the joint, so as to sit on snugly. India-rubber boots are d—nable—stop the circulation, etc., and should never be used unless as a bandage for a weak tendon. There! That's all *I* know about it!"

"A capital day on Saturday" (the letter from which this is an extract was written from Edinburgh), "and 'Kate' distinguished herself over some nasty doubles—a very rare fence in this part of the country, and, consequently, a regular stopper to most of the field."

"I've ridden 'Spots' with harriers. His character is quite correct. He's reasonably fast (quite as fast as 'Kate'), and goes through dirt as if it were a lawn! He won't 'lark;' but get him with the hounds, and he's a gorgeous fencer—possibly a shade too quick; but when he knows me better he'll tone down. Chapman gives a very shy account of 'Limerick.' He says he's a 'floppy' jumper, and a tremendous puller! We shall see! I mean to hunt him next week with

the Cheshire, and shove that double snaffle in his mouth, and *let* him pull. If 'Limerick' is not a fine fencer, I'll never judge by form again as long as I live."

"If you want that black screw exercised for a week or two (say eight or ten days from this), you can lend him to me to take to the Duke of Beaufort's. You can have my £700 grey any time after the 2nd of February—to hunt her tail off, if you like. There! that's an offer; and when she comes you can jump her over your poor black horse, making him previously stand on four bricks! I go to the Duke of Leinster's on Monday for two days, then straight home for the reading of a new piece at the Haymarket."

"Your telegram I got at the theatre, and I at once wired to Johnson to come with 'Kate' and 'Blazes' to the 'Hen and Chickens' tomorrow, so please order two loose-boxes for the dear old souls. If they haven't loose-boxes I suppose I must be content with stalls. I shall hunt every day. The season is so nearly over, I

must make the most of it, for once I return to town no more hunting! I hear the theatre booking for the week is splendid, and as I had a tremendous house here last night at double the usual prices, I may go to the extravagance of having two hunters down. My argument is, work a little extra hard, and deserve therefore a little extra hunting."

"Looking over a letter of yours, I find you want something about 15.3. What do you say to my chestnut mare? You can have any mortal trial, and it is thoroughly understood that I don't care a straw if you don't like her, and, consequently, don't keep her. Why do I part? Simply because with hounds she pulls too much for a cove with only one pulling arm to check her with, and she tires me. She is just on, if not quite, 15.3. Legs as hard as nails, never fill, a splendid feeder, no vice of any description, and steady, *quite* steady, in double and single harness. In the latter, she is always driven in a plain hansom cab, double ring snaffle, and doesn't pull one blessed ounce. To wind up, she can trot fourteen

miles an hour, and jump any earthly thing a horse can get over; but, as I said before, she's not *my* horse, 'cos she pulls too much after hounds. I'm going to (for the future) make all my beasts really useful; they must do hunting and carriage-work."

"I've got myself rather confused in my engagements. I'd forgotten I dine, hunt, and sleep at Rothschild's on Thursday. . . . We'd a *gorgeous* run with Rothschild's yesterday. 'Limerick *pulls*, but is a regular clinker, and can 'stay all day,' and *the next as well!!*"

"I rode 'Limerick' over Blackman's to-day, and a finer, more temperate fencer I never rode. Will his leg stand? I doubt it. You've evidently got a clinker."

"I've got an awfully sore throat; knocked up in the middle of the performance last night, and entirely lost my voice. It's better this morning, though still very husky and painful. It's a bore, for I had arranged to hunt to-morrow. However, Tuesday, please God, will see me in the saddle

again. I had three gorgeous days last week, and one bad one. I must run down soon and do a day with your North Warwickshire. Do they hunt on Mondays? If so, I could come and stay Sunday night, and get up fresh on Monday. To-day I'm as heavy as lead."

"'Limerick' went for thirty-five guineas. I missed his sale by five or ten minutes, or he would have run up to much more. He was a most steady, valuable horse for any class of work, but pulled too much in the hunting-field for me. I'm sorry you didn't get him. I'll sell you 'Miss Wilson' for twenty-five guineas (I gave sixty). She's a big, strong, powerful mare, steady in single and double, and doesn't pull one ounce—literally! She can trot easily twelve miles an hour; she is particularly sound, and carries a lady charmingly. She is a perfect hack, and no vice. She has got a chronic cough, but that never interferes with her, and she is a slight high-blower, but never makes any noise in harness, however fastly driven, and only makes the *slightest noise* even at full gallop. A child can ride or drive her. I part with her as

I shall now be away for seven months, and consequently reduce my stable."

With bare comment I give these passages from Sothern's fox-hunting letters. They will themselves show the extraordinary energy and delight with which he pursued his exacting pastime; how he loved his horses; how minute and candid he was with regard to their capabilities and (a rare thing even with a thorough sportsman) their faults.

The ink-pot into which I dip my pen is made out of a horse's hoof, and there is inscribed upon its silver lid, "The hoof of 'Blazes,' the favourite hunter of E. A. Sothern; killed while hunting with Baron Rothschild's Hounds." Alas, poor "Blazes!" His untimely death took place in March, 1868, and concerning it there is a little tale which my readers will, I hope, think worth telling.

"I killed poor 'Blazes' the other day," wrote Sothern, "with the Baron's hounds—jumped him into a road, met a cart at full trot; the old woman in it got frightened, pulled the wrong rein, and

up we came, smash—crack against each other. The result was fully eighteen inches of shaft broken off in the poor beast's body. I had him shot at once."

When this unfortunate news was broken to the luckless animal's eccentric and not always too prudent groom (he bore the name of Johnson), he wept in a muddled way, and asked, "Oh, poor old 'Blazes!' what did he say?" Unable to resist even this melancholy occasion for a "sell," Sothern replied, "His last word was *Johnson*," and the answer was accepted in good faith!

The following extract from the *Field* of March 20, 1869, will give some notion of the dashing fashion in which he rode to hounds:—

"During a run with the Essex Stag-hounds, on the 16th inst., Mr. Sothern (the celebrated comedian) was riding a pulling thoroughbred at one of the yawning Essex dykes, when a gentleman unfortunately crossed him, cleared the ditch and bank, but rolled over, horse and all, on the other side. Mr. Sothern thereupon 'put on steam' to clear them, and his horse taking a neat 'on and off' from the back of the fallen horse,

as it was in the act of rising, landed safely a foot in advance of the head of the prostrate rider."

That exceptional authority, Mr. Bowen May, the "father," as he is affectionately and appropriately named, of the Queen's Stag-hounds, writes to me as follows:—

"Sothern and I hunted together for years, and in one season with sixteen different packs of hounds, having followed the chase for five days a week. He always looked upon me as his Mentor, as I always took care to 'pull him up,' even in the middle of a run with stag-hounds, so that he was able to keep his engagements at the theatres. On one occasion, when I was absent, he was with the Surrey Stag-hounds, and only kept an engagement at the Richmond Theatre by running a special train from Three Bridges, and then by catching a down-train at Clapham Junction; and then, having no time to change his garments, he appeared on the stage and played his part in a 'cover' coat. The Prince of Wales always sent for him when H.R.H. went from Paddington and to the Slough meets, to join him in his railway-carriage.

"Sothern was a bold rider, and was always well mounted, and as his horses were generally pullers, and as he had a damaged wrist, he could not hold them. Having to 'let them go,' and being only about a ten-stone man, he was always in the 'first flight' with the packs, whether they were fox or stag hounds."

In 1871, Sothern wrote from New York:—

"We remain here eight weeks, then Boston for three, Philadelphia for three, etc., etc., etc., then New York again in April, and home in May. But I must come again in December and stay a year, and then retire and

HUNT

the rest of my LIFE!!!"

This dream was never realized, and, oddly enough, in later years, Sothern entirely lost his love of horses and hunting, declaring that salmon-fishing was the only sport worthy of the name. This he followed with the same eager and restless enthusiasm.

"I am going," he wrote, "to have some magnificent salmon-fishing in June and July. I have rented thirty-nine miles of the best Canadian

river, and I and three friends will whip it for six or eight weeks. It is eighty miles away from civilization. We camp out, Indian tents, bear-shooting, rising by daybreak, going to roost seven p.m., and leading the most primitive life possible. A friend of mine fished there last year, and the average weight of his salmon was 19 lb., the smallest 8 lb., the largest 39 lb."

"You will find them the best and handsomest rods in England. I caught a 47½ lb. salmon the other day with my salmon-rod and a single gut, and my rod is precisely the same as yours."

But Sothern was enthusiastic in small things as well as great. Here is a letter in which he speaks of a very ordinary-looking blackbird which he used to keep, and make much of, in a wicker cage at his house (this was after the bright Kensington "Cedars" days were over), No. 121, in Harley Street:—

"I am glad you like the blackbird," he wrote (he was leaving on a prolonged provincial tour, and had begged me to find a home for the poor

caged creature); "*I* was very, very proud of him." There is something refreshing in the thought that this actively engaged man, who was ever rolling two lives into one, could find time in which to be "very, very proud" of a rather inferior, and (as far as my experience of him went) an absolutely songless blackbird!

CHAPTER IV.

SOTHERN IN HIGH SPIRITS.

No memoir of Sothern would be complete without allusion being made to his curious and humorous, if not altogether satisfactory, mania for "practical joking." For the greater part of his life it absolutely possessed him, and it no doubt had its origin in the investigations into so-called "spiritualism," which in the pre-Dundreary American days he (with characteristic enthusiasm) occupied himself. The story of these researches, and their outcome, was so well told by himself in a letter that, in 1865, he felt called upon to write to an English newspaper, that it may very fittingly form a commencement to this chapter. It ran as follows :—

"Sir,

"There is an article in the *Spiritual Magazine* in which I am referred to. I should

not dream of noticing any article in any such publication, had I not found respectable and rational journals such as yours reproducing statements affecting my credit and candour. I consider it due to the conductors of the daily press of these countries, as well as to myself, to notice remarks on me and on my conduct when I find them transferred to their columns. Had they not been excavated from the gloomy obscurity of their original source they might never have attracted my observation, and certainly would never have obtained my notice.

"Possibly it may be thought that I am doing this spiritual publication a service by bringing it into notice. I do not think so. When you prosecute a pickpocket, you go before the bench as a matter of duty; the pickpocket is certainly brought into public prominence for the time, but it is only that he may be the more effectually recognized, punished, and exposed. Nobody, I suspect, will be perverted to a belief in spiritualism by reading an exposition of spiritual writers.

"Now for the article. The main count in the indictment against me is thus stated :—

"'A few years ago, a party of spiritualists in New York, composed chiefly of actors and actresses, held regular sittings for the production of spiritual phenomena. One of the members of this circle was an actor named Stuart, who was recognized by all as a most powerful medium. The manifestations witnessed at these *séances* were so wonderful as to give to the meeting the distinguishing title of 'The Miracle Circle.' They created so much interest that it was considered a special privilege to be admitted to this magic chamber. Mr. Stuart at that period was better known as Stuart the magnetiser, or magic worker, than Stuart the actor.'

"The 'actor named Stuart' is now better known as 'the actor named Sothern.' Following sufficiently illustrious precedents, I used an assumed name when I entered on my profession, and I only resumed my own by the advice of my friend, Mr. James Wallack. The 'party of spiritualists' was *not* composed chiefly of 'actors and actresses.' It would have been none the worse if it had been; but in reality it was composed of twelve gentlemen of high position in

their respective professions, who, actuated by a common curiosity and interest, joined in a thorough, practical, and exhaustive investigation of the phenomena of 'spiritualism.' We were quite ready for either result: to believe it, if it were true; to reject it, if found false; and in the latter case I, at least, resolved in due time to expose it. For more than two years we had weekly meetings. At these, by practice, we had succeeded in producing not only all the wonderful 'manifestations' of the professional 'media,' but other effects still more startling. We simply tried to reproduce the appearances and the results which we had heard of, and read of, and seen—and we succeeded. Pushing our practice and experiments further, we attained the capacity to execute feats much more remarkable than those presented at any of the spiritual *séances*. An American gentleman and myself took the part of the 'media;' the rest of the company assisted; and I do not hesitate to say that we outdid anything ever attempted or accomplished by Home, or the Davenports, or any of the other more notorious spiritual exhibitors.

"Not the least of our discoveries was *that the whole thing was a myth.* We did all that the spiritualists did, and more; but we were our own 'agents,' and had no need of recourse to supernatural influences, had we had the power to command them. We commenced our *séances* in a spirit of legitimate investigation; we continued them for the sake of the amusement they gave ourselves and our friends. We became famous in a small way. We had to start an engagement book, and to make appointments. People came from all parts of America, and waited for their turn. We got into a larger line of business than any of the professional exhibitors, and we were extensively patronised. The only difference was, *we* didn't charge anything. We took no money, directly or indirectly. Our entertainment, being free, was liberally supported; and when I add that the evenings invariably wound up with a jolly little supper, given solely at our own expense, it may be understood that 'The Miracle Circle' was much favoured and warmly encouraged. The indulgence of our love of fun cost us some money, but yielded us an immensity of pleasure.

To speak colloquially, it was an expensive but extensive 'sell.' We *did* put pens under the table, and get signatures of Shakespeare, and Garrick, and other valuable autographs; we did produce spirit-hands and spirit-forms; people *did* float in the air—at least, we made our audience really believe they did, which was quite sufficient for our purpose and theirs. We exhibited phenomena which were startling enough in all conscience, and we made our visitors believe in their reality. How we succeeded in doing this—how we made some of the most intelligent men in America believe that they really saw and felt what they only fancied they saw and felt—how we produced results the causes of which were not apparent to the physical senses of the spectators—how, in fine, we did things which must have seemed to be, and what many of our visitors believed to be, supernatural and miraculous, I do not intend to explain. We *did* them; how we did them I do not feel any motive to declare; but I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that we did *not* do them by spiritual agencies. Yet professional and paid 'media' came and saw, and them-

selves avowed our superior power over 'the spirits!'

"I have been told by many scientific persons —even in this city where I am now residing —that I am a 'wonderful psychologist.' It is extremely pleasant and very flattering to be told that. Perhaps I am a 'wonderful psychologist' —I hope I am; but I doubt it. At all events, whatever psychological or quasi-spiritual powers I may possess, I have never exhibited them in public; I have never made money by displaying them; I have recognized the difference between performing an interesting and amusing delusion to entertain myself and a private company, and swindling the public by taking guineas from people for showing them as 'spiritual manifestations,' feats which I could perform by physical and mechanical forces of my own.

"I do not know the Messrs. Davenport; I never saw them but once, when I paid some fifteen shillings, I believe, and came away powerfully impressed with the conviction that either their supporters and believers were mad, or that I was, and yet with a comfortable belief in my

own sanity. I had nothing to do with their memorable exposures in England and France.

"The object of this writer in the *Spiritual Magazine* has been to represent me as having exhibited 'spiritual manifestations' in America, and having exposed them here. I have stated, I hope clearly, that I did produce all the 'manifestations' and did exhibit them, but they were not 'spiritual,' and I did not exhibit them in public, nor for money. I therefore consider myself free from the imputations of having obtained money under false pretences, encouraged idle superstitions, or perpetrated blasphemous burlesques of sacred things. I look upon every spiritualist as either an impostor or an idiot. I regard every spiritual exhibitor who makes money by his exhibitions as a swindler. The things that these people do are *not* done by spiritual or supernatural means. I know that; I have proved it. I have done all that they can do, and more. The history of 'spiritualism' in this country and America is, on the one hand, a chronicle of imbecility, cowardly terror of the supernatural, wilful self-delusion, and irreligion; and on the other, of fraud

and impudent chicanery, and blasphemous indecency. I do not say that there are not more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy; but I do say, that as the result of such a practical investigation of 'spiritualism' as I believe few other men have made, I must honestly and fearlessly denounce it as a mockery, a delusion, a snare, and a swindle.

"Yours, etc.

"E. A. SOTHERN.

"Theatre Royal, Glasgow, December 6, 1865."

Yes, these American spiritualistic experiments, and the success which attended them, undoubtedly gave Sothern his insatiable taste for practical joking. He had learnt how easily people could be gulled; he had become an adept in all the little arts and contrivances necessary for such purposes; he had acquired a relish for "selling" (he used this word in his letter, and it was with him a favourite one) all with whom he came in contact, both friends and strangers; and so when, in the days of his popularity and the long runs of his pieces, he had plenty of time on his

hands, he mounted and furiously rode his hobby horse.

Before I give instances of his more elaborate enterprises in this direction, I will speak of the odd freaks that he delighted to play with the post. On one occasion, when he was playing in a country theatre, the local postmaster refused to receive and forward a package because it was just a trifle over the regulation limits. Sothern was annoyed at what he considered official obstructiveness, and, having obtained from the postmaster the precise limits (particularly with regard to weight) of the parcels he would receive, he went to a hatter's shop in the town, and purchased two dozen of empty hat-boxes of the usual cardboard make. These he addressed by aid of the local directory to the principal inhabitants of a notably breezy suburb, and from a dozen different offices had them posted. His delight at seeing the local postman staggering along in a high wind with the huge pile of hat-boxes on his back was infinite, and in the next town that he visited he repeated the performance, only varying it by addressing the two dozen boxes to one individual. Often and

often, as he recalled the incident, have I heard Sothern say how much he would have given to have seen the face of this unknown person when the boxes had been stacked away in his hall.

Playing pranks with the post became from this point his almost daily practice. He had his envelopes printed with all sorts of odd devices, such as, "Refuge for Reformed Atheists," "Mail Boat *Betsy Jane*," "Society for the Propagation of Pure Deism," "Troop Ship *Crocodile*," "Asylum for Confirmed Virgins," "Court of Faculties," "Boodles' Bee Hive," and (these were evidently designed to strike terror into the soul of the nervous letter receiver) "Southwell Small-pox Hospital," "Home for Incurable Itch," and "Curious Specimen of Contagious Bedding." In the last named he would usually enclose a small piece of linen or a fragment cut from a blanket. Then he had a practice of addressing an envelope in pencil to a friend, say, in Brussels, writing to that friend to rub out the address and re-direct the letter in pencil to a friend in Glasgow, and so successively sending the letter round a dozen places until the envelope was almost covered with

postmarks. Then, having got it back from the last of his correspondents, he would erase the pencilled address, and, putting in ink the name and residence of a gentleman in a London Square, and enclosing an invitation to dinner for a date a month old, he would revel in the confident expectation that the recipient, utterly unable to conceive why a plainly addressed letter to "Mr. Suchaone, Lowndes Square," should have been sent round by Brussels, Glasgow, Dublin, Brighton, Inverness, Chester, Northampton, Cork, Scarborough, etc., would indignantly complain to the Postmaster-General, who would in the usual routine send the letter again on its rounds to the bewilderment of all the postmasters.

One of these extraordinary postmark-bestudded envelopes is before me now, stamped Edinburgh, Bradford, Glasgow, Rio de Janeiro, Liverpool, Dundee, London, Suez Canal, and, finally, Birmingham.

Another trick of his was to withdraw the letters—anybody's letters—from the post-rack of any country house in which he might happen to be staying, and write on the outside of their

SUEZ CANA
BOODLES BEE-HIVE.
PAID
LIVERPOOL
3K
GLASGOW
AP 12
70
DUNDEE
AP 16
70
4W
EDINBURG
AP 1
70
Thos Pemberton Esqr
Heathfield Hall
Handsworth
Birmingham
AP 13
70

MANOEL JOAQUIM DA ROCHA
Nº 80
RUA DIREITA
RIO DE JANEIRO
LONDON
APR 7
BIRMINGHAM
APR 9
CONSULAT DE GRECE
LIVERPOOL
GLASGOW
APR 1
BRADFORD
APR 18
YORKS.

envelopes such preposterous but perplexing messages as, "I will bring the five peacocks with me on Saturday" (this to a lady living on a London flat!), "How are you getting on with the cockroaches now?" and so on. By the way, he always used to declare that this old habit of his of writing messages on the reverse side of stuck-down envelopes (and he would frequently adopt this plan in the carrying on of his own correspondence) was the means of bringing in the useful halfpenny post-card.

The liberties that he would take with his addresses were extraordinary. Here is an example:—

To

Smith
John ~~Smythe~~, Esq.,
(my throat's so sore it seems I can't even spell)
—— *Square,*
Blackhampton.

Now and then some of Sothern's victims would attempt retaliation, but seldom with success; and now that I am dealing with his post-office pranks, I may as well tell the following anecdote. A gallant officer in a cavalry regiment, whom Sothern

had "sold," determined on revenge, and elaborately concocted a missive, purporting to be written by a fair lady, suggesting a rendezvous. The letter was carefully prepared on plain paper, was enclosed in an envelope without crest, monogram, or other distinguishing mark, and was duly posted; but the gallant composer forgot that the plain paper he was using bore a water-mark with the name of his club. On receipt of the letter Sothern easily detected the attempted hoax, and proceeded to pay off its would-be perpetrator. He went to a shop in a side-street off Regent Street, and purchased from a dealer in human hair a long tress of the reddest hue and coarsest texture that he could find. Having had this love-lock carefully oiled by his groom, he attached to it a parchment label addressed, in feminine handwriting, to Captain ——, at, let us say, the Plungers' Club, where he knew it was the custom to place the members' letters on a large table in the hall. Captain —— (as Sothern well knew) happened to be out of town for a few days, during which time his brother-officers enjoyed the delight of inspecting the "auburn" tress, and, on his

return to town, the pleasure of mercilessly chaffing their comrade.

Another man who tried to pay back Sothern in his own coin by sending him a bogus telegram which took him away, on a fool's errand, to Liverpool, had an extraordinary punishment. With unexampled audacity, Sothern announced his too-daring friend's death in the papers, at the same time advertising the sale of his furniture by an auction, "*at which only Jews would be allowed to purchase!*"

The bogus telegram was an all-too-favourite instrument of warfare with Sothern himself, and he would think nothing of "wiring" to a friend in a distant part as follows:—

"Poor Suchaone" (naming a complete stranger) "died last night at ten o'clock. Please arrange for the reception of his remains in your town to-morrow morning;" and this would be followed by another, saying, "His poor wife and children will start by the 12.30 train. For pity's sake, meet and console them. You will find the wife pretty, and the children most interesting. Your kindness will be appreciated by all parties."

I think that it must have been these postal and telegraphic feats that set Sothern thinking that something odd and whimsical ought to be done with letter-carrying pigeons. Certainly I know that while filling a professional engagement in a provincial town, celebrated for the fanciers of "homing birds," he took extraordinary pains, and spent a good deal of money, to procure some of "the right sort;" but, except a marvellous story that he used with much unction to relate, I do not think that out of this notion anything came. I will relate it in his own words:—

"I used to get a lot of fellows together in the billiard-room at home" (Sothern's circle of acquaintance was a large one, and on the occasions when this trick was aired he no doubt secured the attendance—and I was not one of them—of the most credulous among his friends), "and after we had smoked and chatted for a time some one, who would be in my confidence, would lead the conversation up to pigeon-flying and the wonderful exploits of the extraordinary birds in my possession. At this I would express annoyance, and my friends asking 'Why?' I would say, 'Oh,

nobody believes what my birds have done, and can do, and since I am very fond of them, and, after all, only keep them for my own amusement, I don't somehow care to hear them slightingly talked of. Let us change the subject.' After this, of course, no one would change the subject, and some extraordinary pigeon yarns were told by my confidant, myself, and other men who did not like to appear ignorant on the matter. Then I would say, with a smile, 'Ah, if only old Jim was at his best I could show these fellows what a pigeon could really do!' 'Old Jim!' my confederate would cry out. 'What! you don't mean to say that *he's* alive still—the bird that came home from the Himalayas, and that has crossed the Atlantic a hundred and fifty times?' 'Oh, come, come, that's rather too much!' some one would now be sure to say. 'I don't believe that!' 'Then, damme, sir, you *shall* believe it!' I would answer, ringing the bell in apparent ill-temper, and instructing the servant to bring in old Jim; and then, when in a wicker cage that eighteen-penny impostor made his appearance, I would take him out, and, stroking his feathers, say, 'Yes,

there's the bird that has brought home to my family a report of my receipts from every provincial town in the three kingdoms, who has secured me one or two splendid American engagements, to whose swift wings, indeed, I owe much of my success. Poor old Jim! He's had the pip, he's got the roup, and some day he'll moult for the last time; but his work's done, and if it costs me a thousand a year he'll now roost in peace until the end of his days.' 'Couldn't you,' my confederate would now say, 'send Jim just a little distance, just to show how extraordinary his powers are?' And then, after much refusal and more persuasion, I would say, 'Well, well, he shall go just as far as Blisworth with a message to Jones. I dare say, after all, a little night-fly like that will freshen the dear old boy up.' Then the message to Jones would be written, affixed to Jim's wing, and through the window the bird would be released. After an hour of billiards and general talk, relieved with good cigars and anything in the way of refreshment that anybody cared to take, a fluttering at the window-panes would be heard, and, rushing out, I would return

with *an* exhausted and bedraggled Jim, faithfully bearing Jones's reply to my message. Believe it or not as you will, not one of the people who witnessed this thing ever realized the absurdity of sending a pigeon *to* a place to bring a message back *from* it. They received Jim's double as a prodigy, and wended their innocent ways homeward, placidly murmuring, 'Marvellous!'"

For the successful carrying out of many of Sothern's elaborately planned jokes, it was necessary that he should have the services of a confederate only second in sharpness to himself, and there existed no class of people that he better loved to "sell" than those who, when his escapades had become notorious, desired, without any qualification for the task, to act in that difficult and delicate capacity.

On one occasion a somewhat imbecile young man, who had a slight acquaintance with him, and who loved to boast to his club-friends of his close intimacy with the most popular actor of the day, said to him how much he would like to take a part in one of these jokes. "And so you shall, my boy," said Sothern, clapping him on the

shoulder and taking him apart, "for I may as well tell you that from the very first moment that I saw you I recognized the fact that you, above all living men, understand me and my ways. We ought to have been brothers!" A scheme was soon planned. On that very night, which, by the way, promised to be a stormy one, Sothern was expected at a supper-party, and it was agreed that the now thoroughly flattered and delighted young man should find his way on to the roof of the house, and station himself close to the chimney communicating with the room in which the guests would be assembled. The idea was this. Sothern was to lead the conversation up to ventriloquism, and a confederate in the room was at once to say what a wonderful master of that peculiar power he was known to be. When pressed to do so, Sothern was to modestly say that he would see what he could do to amuse the company, and, talking up the chimney from the room, he was to be answered by the somewhat imbecile young man on the roof. Being perfectly arranged, everything went well. Although he professed to be somewhat out of

practice, Sothern had by these means at the very commencement of the evening performed such wonderful feats of ventriloquism, that when the party sat down to supper it was generally agreed that in future the redoubtable "Valentine Vox" must be thought of little account. Now, however, he asked, on account of a tired and unpractised voice, to be excused from giving further demonstrations of his skill—the fact being that as supper was served in another room he could no longer carry on a conversation with his ambitious young friend on the roof. At this point it had been agreed that he should revisit *terra firma*, but it is hardly necessary to say that Sothern had made arrangements by virtue of which the ladder which had aided in the ascent was by this time removed. He had, however, reckoned without his host, and the last two acts of this entertainment were unrehearsed ones. By hook or by crook the young man, in despair at finding his ladder gone, found his way to the chimney of the supper-room, and lustily called down it, "Sothern! For Heaven's sake, come and help me! I can't get down, and it's raining like mad!" For a

moment Sothern was taken aback, and felt that the whole trick was about to be exposed, when, to his delight and amazement, the company rose as one man, and declared that anything half so marvellous in the way of ventriloquism had never before been attempted or achieved. "Why," cried his enthusiastic host, "you said you were tired and out of practice! you declared you could do no more, and yet, at the very moment that you were apparently talking to me, your voice came down the chimney again with a force unparalleled!" It was not in Sothern's nature to deny the flattering impeachment, but, in the midst of the congratulations that were now showered upon him, his voice came down the chimney in such much greater force, and began to be identified with so much strong language (the company unsuspectingly regarded this as a continued manifestation of his "power"), that he suggested that he should once more give amusement by carrying on a short conversation. This he did, and in it artfully contrived to persuade his victim that if he would remain quiet for a very short time he would come and help him down—which

now, for obvious reasons, was the best thing that he could do; but, as luck would have it, before the specified short time had elapsed some one in the room, imitating Sothern's voice, called up the chimney, "Are you still there?" and this proving the last straw upon the rain-drenched back of the much-enduring young man, he replied —and, unfortunately, he accompanied his incisive words with a piece of slate or mortar, or some other roof-top missile that he had managed to find—"Oh, go to H—l!!!"

Sothern bolted from the room and from the house. I am afraid that he lost his quickly acquired fame as a ventriloquist, and I do not think that he any longer enjoyed the admiration and intimacy of the somewhat imbecile young man; but he told the story with an unction that was as infectious as it was delightful.

The story of a joke that he perpetrated at the expense of the beautiful and gifted Adelaide Neilson may be told in his own words: "Miss Neilson happening to ask me for a little *souvenir* on her departure to Florida, I inquired what she would like best. She said she would leave it

entirely to me; any trifle would be valued as a parting gift from such an old friend. Whereupon I asked her, on the spur of the moment, whether she would like a grizzly bear as an appropriate playmate and a pleasant ornament to a lady's chamber. She replied, in the same spirit, 'Yes, send him up,' and there the banter ended. However, happening half an hour afterwards to meet Mr. Moss, the treasurer of Wallack's theatre, he mentioned that he was very much annoyed by a confounded bear that somebody had sent him from California, and which he did not know what on earth to do with. 'Where is he?' said I. 'At the back of the stage,' said he, 'with half a dozen men sitting on his cage to keep him quiet, one of whom has already lost all his trousers and a good deal of his flesh through the bars.' 'Good,' said I; 'I will relieve you of him. I know just where to place him.' No sooner said than done, and in half an hour 'Grizzly' was landed at the Fifth Avenue Hotel by four porters, with a stout chain about as big as the cable of a man-of-war, and a muzzle like a fire-grate, in the middle of Miss Neilson's drawing-room and a numerous

company of guests, who had called to bid the fair *Juliet* adieu. Miss Neilson took the jest in good part, kept her temper, and tried to keep her bear ; but that was an effort beyond her, and Bruin was finally presented to the Zoological Gardens in Central Park, thus ending the modern adaptation, ' with a difference,' of the old story of Beauty and the Beast."

It was with Miss Neilson's husband, Mr. Philip Lee, for a victim that he perpetrated that which was probably the most extensive (and expensive) of all his extravagantly conceived and carefully carried out " sells." Unfortunately for Mr. Lee, he expressed, on the occasion of his first visit to New York, and in Sothern's presence, doubts as to the existence of the wild and delightful American Bohemian life of which he had heard. Sothern told him that his letters of introduction were all to the wrong people, but that if he liked he could introduce him to the right set, and Mr. Lee having expressed his gratitude, a supper-party was arranged. Covers were laid for twelve. Sothern presiding, and Mr. Lee, as the guest of the evening, sitting on his right hand. Previously, it

should be stated, he had been introduced by his host and Mr. W. J. Florence (also an inveterate joker, and of course in the secret) to the other (supposed) notabilities who gathered round the sumptuously spread board. For a time all went well, but while the soup was being served one well-known man was seen to take from under his coat a battle-axe, and another celebrity drew from beneath his collar a dirk-knife with a blade over a foot long, which he gravely unclasped and placed beside his plate. Then another took a "six-shooter" from his pocket, while his neighbour drew a scythe and a policeman's staff from under the table, and laid them in the middle of the board.

"For Heaven's sake," whispered the astonished Mr. Lee into Sothern's ear, "what *does* this mean?"

"Keep quiet," replied Sothern; "it is just what I most feared. These gentlemen have been drinking, and they have quarrelled about a friend of theirs, a Mr. Weymyss Jobson, quite an eminent scholar, and a very estimable gentleman; but I hope, for our sakes, they will not attempt to settle their quarrel here. It is dreadful; but I hope,

dear boy, that they will go away quietly and have no row. It is a fashion they have here to settle their disputes at a table, or wherever they meet. All we can do now is to await events."

"But there will be murder here!" exclaimed Mr. Lee. "Can we not give warning to the police?"

"Impossible, my dear fellow," said Sothern, regretfully. "Were you even to be suspected by these men of any desire to leave the room, you would be shot like a dog, and no satisfaction would ever be given your relatives in a court of justice. Such is the country."

"It is an infernal country, then!" muttered the guest.

For a few moments all went well, when suddenly a quarrel broke out at the end of the table, and one of the party, springing to his feet, fiercely exclaimed—

"Whoever says that the 'History of the French Revolution,' written by my friend, David Weymyss Jobson, is not as good a book in every respect as that written by Tom Carlyle on the same subject, is a liar and a thief; and if there

is any fool present who desires to take it up, I am his man!"

All the guests rose suddenly, and every man grasped his weapon; shots were fired, and the room was filled with smoke and uproar; several of the guests closed and struggled with each other, and one of the conspirators, thrusting a long knife into the amazed victim's now trembling hand, said—

"Defend yourself! This is butchery—sheer butchery!"

But Sothern sat quietly by, and gave as his advice—

"Keep cool, and *don't get shot.*"

By this time the whole hotel was roused, and I fancy that the "joke" went further than even Sothern in his wildest mood intended. His guests of the evening were a troupe of knock-about negro minstrels, who had been instructed how to act.

Among many amusing stories that that clever comedian, Mr. John T. Raymond, had to tell of his English travelling experiences with Sothern was the following:—They were journeying to-

gether from Glasgow to Birmingham, and, having agreed to appear to be strangers to each other, they entered a first-class non-smoking compartment, in which sat two typical English gentlemen. "Do you object to smoking?" asked Raymond of them. "Certainly not," they politely replied; and then the same question was put to Sothern, who angrily answered, "I *do*, sir—I do most assuredly. It is a piece of impertinence on your part to ask such a question." "I beg your pardon," replied Raymond, modestly. "I am only an American, and quite unused to the customs of this country." "That's easy enough to see, sir," said the apparently indignant Sothern. "You are evidently either an American or a fool. We don't conduct ourselves in that way in England." As if terrified half out of his life, Raymond sank back into a corner of the carriage, and the two disgusted Englishmen expressed themselves freely and audibly concerning Sothern's apparently offensive and overbearing conduct. Gazing at them calmly, Sothern quietly took from his pocket a cigar, lighted it, and puffed away in the most easy manner, as indifferent to his surroundings as if he

had been alone. This was too much for the honest-minded Englishmen. They looked at the small and inoffensive Raymond—they looked at the well-knit, aggressive Sothern, and they "went for him." At first they talked "at" him, then they talked to him; they tried to make him put his cigar out, explain, apologize; they declared they would call the guard, they threatened all kinds of things; but Sothern sat imperturbable and silent as the sphynx, calmly smoking his cigar, and filling the compartment with smoke. In the midst of this scene the train stopped at a station; and then Sothern, throwing a contemptuous look on the Englishmen, and taking Raymond by the arm, said, "Come, John, we'll change carriages here. We'll leave these ill-mannered fellows to themselves!"

Once, taking a midnight railway journey after a late and exhausting performance, he made efforts to secure a compartment to himself; but at the last moment, just as the train was starting, another traveller, somewhat rudely pushed by the porter in attendance, opened the door, and claimed and asserted his right of admission. Sothern said

nothing, but when the train had started he opened his travelling-bag, and, looking malevolently at his fellow-passenger, commenced stropping his razors. After the first stopping-station had been passed he had that compartment to himself.

The following story has been told (with variations) by Mr. Toole, but it is so characteristic of Sothern's peculiar vein of humour that it must needs be repeated here. With Mrs. John Wood he entered an ironmonger's shop, and, advancing to the counter, said, "Have you the second edition of Macaulay's 'History of England'?" The shop assistant explained the nature of the business, and suggested the name of a neighbouring bookseller. "Well, it don't matter whether it is bound in calf or not," said Sothern. "But, sir, this is *not* a bookseller's," was the reply. "It doesn't matter how you wrap it up," said Sothern; "a piece of brown paper will do—the sort of thing that you would select for your own mother." "Sir," shouted the man, "we don't keep books; this is an ironmonger's shop." "Yes," said Sothern, "I see the binding differs, but as long as the

proper fly-leaf is in, I'm not very particular." "Sir," fairly shrieked the bewildered man, "can't you see you have made a mistake and come into the wrong shop?" "Certainly," said Sothern; "I'm in no hurry, and I'll wait while you reach it down." Believing that his strange customer was either deaf or mad, the man went off to the back part of the premises, and returned with the proprietor of the establishment. "What is it that you require, sir?" asked that individual of Sothern, in a bland yet determined voice. "I want," was the prompt and lucid reply, "a small, ordinary file, about six inches in length." "Certainly, sir," said the ironmonger, producing the article, and casting a look of supreme disgust upon his unfortunate assistant. Mrs. John Wood, who, when they entered the shop, had no idea what her madcap companion was going to do, very nearly spoiled the joke by her ill-restrained but not inexcusable laughter.

His pranks with tradespeople were, indeed, innumerable. Amongst other experiences in this connection, I have been with him when he walked into a post-office, and bewildered the person behind

the counter by asking for "some nice *fresh* stamps, suitable for an invalid." And then, after he had inspected sheets of all the different values, declaring that this was a case in which expense need not be considered, rejecting them all because he "really feared they were not quite *fresh* enough."

At a little social club in Glasgow, Sothern was in the habit of sometimes meeting at after-theatre suppers a college Professor (in his own words "a singularly clever and jolly fellow"), who had a way of abruptly leaving the room without taking the trouble to say good-bye to any one who might be present. On one occasion, when both the actor and the Professor were present, the former happened to sit next to an outspoken Major (there is no need to mention names), who, in the course of conversation, remarked, "I went to-night to see the world-famed conjurer, Professor ——. What a pity it is that he should appear before the public in such a shameful condition!" "Why, what was the matter?" asked Sothern. "He was drunk, sir," replied the Major—"disgracefully drunk." Know-

ing that the Major and the Professor did not know each other, seeing his chance, and yielding to temptation, Sothern quietly nudged his neighbour, at the same time saying, in an impressive aside, "Hush!" The Major, feeling that he had committed himself, looked up quickly, and Sothern said, "My dear sir, you have made a mistake. You surely don't mean that he was drunk?" "No, no," replied the Major in a disconcerted sort of way, "not exactly drunk, but—but—but—well—confused, you understand. I've seen a good many of the English conjurers, and what I meant to imply was, that I don't consider he comes up to their average." At this juncture, as luck would have it, the Professor rose from the table and left the room, which those who knew him recognized as his quiet way of taking his departure without breaking up a social party; but when he was fairly gone, Sothern turned to the Major and said, "I am afraid this is a very awkward business! I wish with all my soul that you hadn't said it!" "What is it? What *did* I say?" was the not unnatural reply. "Why," said Sothern, "didn't you see the indignant way

in which that man got up and left the room? That's the son-in-law of the conjurer—married his daughter only two days ago, and of course he naturally feels indignant at the very pointed remark that he heard you make." "D—n it," said the Major, "why didn't you tell me? You nudged me, and you confused me." "Nonsense," said Sothern, seriously; "I looked at you, and winked at you, feeling that you were an intelligent fellow and would take a hint; but, as the thing is done, my advice to you is to write a manly, straightforward letter, explaining the affair in a semi-apologetic way, and saying, as an easy means of getting out of it, that, having had a remarkably jolly supper, you were perhaps more or less under the influence of wine." Falling into the trap, the regretful Major wrote a note to Sothern's dictation, and Sothern undertook to send it to the Professor. As a matter of course, he did *not* send it, but the next day wrote a letter, and had it copied and signed in the Professor's name, which was one of the most grossly insulting in its character that one could conceive. It read something like this, "Sir, simply because

you happen to be a cavalry officer, and I a quiet university Professor, you think you can with impunity insult me by assailing the purity of my honoured father-in-law. As you yourself confess in your note that you are only a drunken cad"—and so forth, and so forth. The next morning the Major called on Sothern and showed him this letter. "He calls me a drunken cad!" he said excitedly; "and I mean to kick him." Sothern soothed him as well as he could, and, directly he was gone, wrote a note to the conjurer in the name of the Major, to the effect that he had received a letter from his son-in-law saying that he would horsewhip him at the first opportunity. That brought another communication which still further complicated matters; but as Sothern wrote all the missives himself, he held the trump cards in his own hand. These letters went backwards and forwards for several days, and finally Sothern sent one from the Professor challenging the Major, at the same time causing a number of telegrams to be transmitted to him from different parts of Scotland from men with whom he knew he was intimate, expressive of

their astonishment that a gentleman so well known for his distinguished bravery should have been guilty of conduct so utterly unbecoming his position. Now, this threw the unfortunate Major into a state of great excitement and perplexity. He was a man of warm temperament and high courage, who would have by no means objected to "meet his man," but who respected his country's laws, and who, as an officer, had his own reasons for strictly regarding them. Sothern at this crisis started for London, leaving behind him a batch of letters and telegrams of the most slighting and insulting description, which were delivered to the Major on the following day. Rendered desperate by these, he followed Sothern to town, sending him a telegram in advance, begging for an appointment, and saying that he should act under his advice. Sothern at once arranged to have the Glasgow Professor to dine with him on the very day on which he asked the Major to call, and when the latter walked into the room he was completely staggered to find the former advance and shake him cordially by the hand. Of course the gallant Major could not

resist what he now regarded as an evidence of goodwill, and commenced to make explanations, to which the innocent Professor listened in astonishment, declaring his entire ignorance of the whole affair. Not having an idea what it was all about, he jumped to the conclusion that the Major was drunk, and as Sothern kept making signs to him, he treated him accordingly. At last the situation became so ludicrous that Sothern felt bound to tell the whole story, and—well, let us hope that he was forgiven.

There is a story of a joke that he played in conjunction with another actor on a fastidious hotel guest, who happened to occupy a room adjoining theirs. He was an elderly gentleman, and he had been complaining of the noise the two actors made when they came home from the theatre, and so it was determined that he should have a "good time." One night, a little past twelve o'clock, the two actors sat down at the table in their room. On it they placed a large number of plates and glasses, and, having made sure that their irritable neighbour was in his room, they proceeded to produce in most realistic

style the noise and jollification of a large supper-party. First, Sothern would get up and make a speech, at the same time stamping his feet and clapping his hands to personate several other people, while his confederate would rattle the dishes, jingle the glasses, and shout "Hear! hear!" Occasionally, to heighten the illusion, Sothern would go to the door and apparently bid one of the party good night, tramp noisily down the room, and inquire of a score of imaginary persons whether they had all they wanted, and what wines they liked best. In this way some dozens of supposititious guests departed from the room, while the unhappy old man next door, thoroughly tired out and disgusted at his vain efforts to go to sleep, paced the floor in despair. Finally, when, at about sunrise, the actors began to get tired, they bade their last guest a noisy farewell and retired. In the morning the old man gave up his room and left the hotel in high dudgeon. Thereafter the two actors came in as late and made as much noise as they liked.

To Mr. Toole I am indebted for the anecdote of Florence getting home late one night and

finding upon his dining-room table a very tender note in a lady's handwriting. The signature was unknown to him, and, after carefully considering the epistle, he came to the conclusion that his friend Sothern was the writer of it. Florence immediately wrote, and despatched by a messenger, a furious letter to Sothern, from whose persecution, as he regarded it, in another matter, he was at the moment keenly suffering. "Your conduct," he wrote, "is neither that of an actor nor a gentleman." In the morning he regretted the hasty letter that he had written, and which must by this time have been delivered and received. A few weeks afterwards he met Sothern in the street.

"How d'you do, Florence?" said Sothern. "You're quite a stranger."

"That's how I have been feeling," said Florence. "Ever since I wrote that letter to you I concluded it would put an end to our friendship."

"That letter—what letter? Oh yes, I remember; something about neither an actor nor a gentleman? But there was no name at the top

or at the bottom ; I remember now ; so, guessing it was intended for Boucicault, I redirected it and sent it on ! "

When playing in America, under the management of Mr. Abbey, the two had a wager together, the stakes being two silk hats. Sothern was the winner, and Mr. Abbey wrote an order to the principal hatter in New York, asking that they should be sent to him at the box-office of the theatre. Writing this order quickly, he had left a blank space before the figure two, and when his back was turned, Sothern quickly inserted in front of it a six. The order was duly posted, and in course of time, perplexed as the hatter must have been at this extraordinary requirement on the part of Mr. Abbey, the sixty-two hats were delivered, together with a bill, and a letter expressing his satisfaction at being favoured with such a large order. Mr. Abbey happened to be out when the hats arrived, and his amazement on his return at finding the box-office literally filled with the sixty-two hat-boxes was great. The man who delivered the hats also brought Mr. Abbey's

order, which was written in pencil; and Sothern, who was on the look-out, had immediately taken the letter from him and quietly rubbed out his own six, so that the astonished and indignant Mr. Abbey, when he asked to see the order, read it, just as he had written it, for *two* hats. He showed it to Sothern, saying, "What the devil does Mr. —— mean by sending me sixty-two hats, when my order was for two?"

"Poor fellow!" said Sothern, shaking his head; "I really thought he would leave off, but he's evidently at it again."

"At what?" asked Mr. Abbey.

"Oh, it only shows what drink will do if a man persists in it," was the reply. "You had better send the hats back with some sound advice concerning his too-well-known habits, and pay the bill."

This advice was followed, and an angry correspondence between the hatter and Mr. Abbey had reached an acute stage before the perpetrator of the joke, having thoroughly enjoyed himself, stepped in and cleared the matter up.

Mr. Florence has told some wonderful stories

of the "sells" that Sothern prepared for his delectation, generously enough premising the narration of them by saying, "For a good square, original, practical joke, no man that I ever heard of can touch Ned Sothern; his inventive powers are marvellous."

"He once," this good-natured and even appreciative victim went on to say, "inserted an advertisement in the New York *Herald*, the substance of which was that I wanted ten dogs, two each Newfoundland, black-and-tan, spitz, setters, and poodles, and that dog dealers might apply at seven o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon, for three days, at my residence. The next morning by eight o'clock the street in front of my house was crowded with men and dogs, fighting their way to my door. Aroused by the awful noise, I got out of my bed, went to the window, and as I drew back the curtain and exposed my head and shoulders, every fellow in that motley crowd held up his dog and yelled, 'Here he is, Mr. Florence; this is the one you want!' I don't know what else they said, for the howling and barking of the dogs and the

laughter of the crowd drowned all other sounds. I was at a loss to account for this strange sight; but Mrs. Florence, coming to the window, and realizing the situation, said, 'I see what it is; it cannot be anything but one of Ned Sothern's jokes. Look—*look!* There he is himself!' And sure enough there he was, looking at a beautiful Skye-terrier which he ultimately purchased. He turned to my window, and, with that characteristic way he had of adjusting his eye-glasses, he put them on and looked straight at me as if he had never seen me, and then innocently asked a boy, who was holding an ugly cur, 'Who lives in this house? What queer person is that who is shaking his fist at us?' 'Why, Florence, the actor, lives there, and he advertised for dogs, and that's what's the matter,' said the urchin. 'Going into the dog business, I suppose?' said Sothern, again glancing dreamily at the windows and walking leisurely away.

"At another time he sent three or four undertakers to my house in the middle of the night. The last trick he played upon me was very good. I had invited a number of fellows to

dine with me, and we were expecting a good time. When we were pretty well through the dessert, one of the gentlemen went outside into the hall, and in a few minutes returned, saying that there was an old man at the door who wished to see Mr. Florence, and that he would not go away until I came to him. After a little while I went out, and found the antediluvian on the step outside. He seemed to be very infirm and quite lame. I invited him inside, and he told me that he was about to return to the old country,—that he had lost all his family in America, and was going home to the land of his fathers to die. He had a few things left from the general wreck of his household which he wished to sell, and thereupon he took some mantel ornaments and other articles of virtu from his pockets, saying they were the last things he had saved, and if I could spare him three hundred dollars for them he could buy a steerage ticket that would carry him home. I saw that the articles were valuable, told him that I would keep them, and handed him three hundred dollars. Thinking I had done a pretty good thing, I returned to the dining-room

and gave orders to a servant to let the beggar out. The servant returned, saying that the old fellow had already gone; and so, indeed, he had. Some of the company then suggested that he *might* have been a fraud, and suggested that I should 'just look round and see if he had not taken a few things.' It then bethought me that the articles he produced looked like some of my own. I rushed into the parlour to find that the old thief had taken my own things. The alarm was given and the police sent for.

"In a few moments two officers appeared and began a search. One of the servants then reported that he had seen the old man going upstairs. The officers rushed up, and after a look through the rooms on the two upper stories discovered him looking over some photographs. The officers, of course, seized him. He resisted, and gave it to them pretty roughly with his tongue.

"'Bring the old ruffian down,' I cried; 'bring him into the dining-room.'

"Until then I had not thoroughly scanned the aged villain's countenance. Imagine my amazement when I looked into that eye which no power

on earth could disguise or change, to find that the old man I had hold of was Sothern himself! It was a dead sell on us all."

Sothern, who had actually been one of Mr. Florence's guests at dinner, had, it appeared, come provided with a wig, beard, slippers, a long coat, and a villainous old hat, and, managing to slip out of the room, had, in a few moments, transformed himself into the disreputable old beggar-man.

Mr. Stephen Fiske has also related some curious experiences that befell him when in the company of this incorrigible practical joker. He was walking with Sothern down Regent Street one day, when he said, "You go ahead a little, Fiske, and I'll go back, but we will both take the Atlas omnibus." "I" (says Mr. Fiske) "followed his instructions, and, entering the omnibus, found Sothern sitting in the diagonally opposite corner. I naturally looked at him with some curiosity to know why he had asked me to go on ahead. Perceiving this, he assumed a very fierce and belligerent expression, and exclaimed, 'Are you staring at me, sir?' The omnibus was filled with

several elderly ladies, two quiet gentlemen who looked like clergymen, and a farmer from the country. I took the cue at once, and replied, 'No; if I wanted to stare at anybody, I would stare at a better-looking man than yourself.' At this Sothern's indignation apparently became uncontrollable, and it required all the force of the clergymen, seconded by the farmer, to keep him in his seat, and prevent him from throwing himself upon me. Finally, he insisted upon stopping the 'bus,' and invited me to step outside, and either apologize then and there for the insult or fight him on the spot. I pretended to prefer to do the latter, but said I would remain in the omnibus; whereupon Sothern took off his overcoat, and handed it to the nearest old lady to hold for him while he chastised me for my impertinence. In the course of the desultory remarks in which we then indulged, he said that he would allow nobody except his friend John Robinson, of Philadelphia, to speak to him in that way and live; whereupon I immediately informed him that my name was Robinson, Christian name John, and that I had just arrived from America, but

that I hadn't the pleasure of his acquaintance, nor did I particularly desire it. In an instant Sothern's manner completely changed, and, climbing over the old ladies, the clergymen, and the farmer, to my corner of the omnibus, he endeavoured to embrace me like a long-lost friend. He declared that he had never been more delighted in his life, stopped the omnibus, and proposed that we should get out together, which we thereupon proceeded to do. The comedy we had enacted, and the astonishment depicted on the faces of the inmates of the vehicle, exceeded anything I ever saw on the stage, and afforded food for laughter for many days."

Mr. Fiske has also recorded another episode, which he described as "A Spiritual Joke." "I remember," he said, "a curious experiment which Sothern made in New York, while a well-known actress was playing at the Winter Garden. Sothern was engaged in a discussion on spiritualism with a gentleman in the corridor or lobby, and said, 'Now let me give you an instance of the power of a medium. You observe that Miss —— is on the stage, and of course she can't hear

what I say at this instant. But if you will watch her while I count "one, two, three," you will notice that she will tremble, turn pale, and lean against the actor with whom she is playing.' As Sothern did so, he pulled out his handkerchief, rubbed it against the window looking into the audience, and precisely what he had predicted occurred. It was so naturally done that even I was deceived until after the performance, when the actress, sending for me, said, 'Mr. Fiske, what was Mr. Sothern's object in asking me, as a special favour, to lean against H—— when he rubbed his handkerchief against the glass?' I did not myself find out until, during a subsequent conversation at supper, he explained the joke. It illustrates one of his methods. He had told her what to do."

Mr. Fiske's omnibus story reminds me how fond Sothern at all times was of making public conveyances the targets for his wayward humour. On one occasion, I remember, he called a hansom that was "crawling" along the Strand, got into it, and began earnestly to read a newspaper. "Where to, sir?" asked the driver, having closed

the doors, and touching his hat; but this question had to be repeated some half-dozen times before Sothern, looking up dreamily from his paper, took any notice of it.

"*Where to?*" he then said somewhat angrily. "Why, aren't we there yet? Where have you been driving me to, then?"

Cabman. We haven't been driving at all——

Sothern (*interrupting him*). *We* haven't been driving! Of course *we* haven't been driving! Do you think that when I engaged this cab I meant to come and share your seat, and hold one of the reins?

Cabman (*sulkily*). Well, then, *I* haven't been driving—*there.*

Sothern. That's just where you are in the wrong. You ought to have been driving there. What else did I take this cab for?

Cabman. But you didn't tell me where you wanted to go to.

Sothern. Of course I didn't. If I had known where I wanted to go to, naturally I should have walked there. I leave all that to you.

Cabman. Come now, governor, tell me where I am to drive to.

Sothern (*looking at him earnestly*). Do you mean to tell me that you really don't know?

Cabman (*losing his temper*). How should I know?

Sothern. Why, I was always given to understand that you fellows knew London thoroughly well.

Cabman (*on his dignity*). So I do know London well. No man better.

Sothern. I should have thought, then, that Leicester Square——

Cabman. Leicester Square! You never said that before.

Sothern. Of course I didn't. Well, now, perhaps, you know where to go to.

(*Cabman indignantly mounts his box and drives off. Sothern again immerses himself in his newspaper. Leicester Square is, of course, soon reached.*)

Cabman (*with his mouth at the roof-trap*). Which number, sir?

Sothern. Don't bother me; I'm busy.

Cabman. Well, but I only wanted to know which number.

Sothern. That doesn't sound a great deal either, does it? Get down, my good fellow, and we'll talk about it. We shall never come to an understanding while you're up there, and I'm down here.

Cabman (*at the door*). Which number, sir?

Sothern. Upon my soul, *I* don't know. What place is this?

Cabman (*surlily*). Leicester Square.

Sothern. Indeed? Why did we come here?

Cabman. Because you said you wanted to come here.

Sothern. No, no; pardon me. I remember now. You suggested Leicester Square, and I, thinking you seemed to be a man of taste, jumped at it. I was right. It's a pretty place. I like it. I'll take you by the hour, the day, the week, the month, anything you like; only drive quietly round and round it, so that I can see it thoroughly and at my leisure.

(*The Cabman, thinking that he is dealing with a lunatic, and possibly a dangerous one, remounts his box, and drives "round and round" the square. Sothern again buries himself in his newspaper. After a lapse of some three-quarters of an hour the cabman once more stops, gets down, and stands at the door, which he has opened.*)

Cabman. Look here, governor, for mercy's sake, get out, and, if you like, blow the fare! We've been round this 'ere square the dickens only knows how many times, and, however you may feel, *me and the old 'orse is both blind dizzy!*

Sothern is himself responsible for the following anecdote, and it may as well be told in his own words. "Not long ago, Mr. Toole and myself were breakfasting with a party of friends at an inn in Greenwich. No sooner had the waiter left the room for an instant than I proposed that we should remove the plate from the cloth, and get under the table. This we did without loss of time, taking every article of silver-ware from the table, down to the spoons, and throwing open the window. After a while the door was opened and the waiter reappeared.

"'Hallo!' he cried, seeing the company gone, also the silver, and the window wide open, 'here's a rum go! I'm blest if they aren't run away with the silver! Here, Dick (to a waiter who was passing), the gentlemen 'as run away with the silver! Help me find the guv'nor!' With that he made a hasty exit, whereupon the party resumed their places, after shutting down the

window and replacing the dishes, the knives, the forks, and the spoons. When the 'guv'nor' appeared, breathless and cursing, not loud, but deep, he found a party of gentlemen in the full possession of his silver-ware, quietly discussing the fish. His ejaculation of rage changed to astonishment and relief.

"'Eh, what?' said he, 'everything secure? Why, James, you confounded rascal, what do you mean?'

"'So help me, guv'nor——' commenced the bewildered waiter.

"'You're drunk, you idiot!' exclaimed the irate landlord, and then, bowing to the company, 'Gentlemen, I beg your pardon. I will withdraw.'"

Sothern also told the following story. "One morning at breakfast in the public-room of the Continental Hotel, Philadelphia, I observed an old gentleman who was obviously very much annoyed at the delay of the waiter in bringing his breakfast. He was continually looking at his watch and apparently muttering oaths of abdominal origin. For some time I paid

little attention to him, but at last, becoming either interested or annoyed with him, I asked the head-waiter who he was. He told me he was General So-and-so, an irascible old bachelor, and one of the regular boarders of the house. While waiting for my own breakfast I had emptied my pockets of the letters which I had to acknowledge that morning, and among them found what we call a 'property letter,' that had accidentally found its way among my own papers. A property letter, you know, means a letter used on the stage, and this one read as follows:—

"'*Young man, I know thy secret—thou lovest above thy station: if thou hast wit, courage, and discretion, I can secure to thee the realization of thy most sanguine hopes, etc., etc.*'

"It is the letter which *Claude Melnotte* reads in 'The Lady of Lyons.' It struck me on the instant that I would enclose it in an envelope, send it to the old gentleman, and watch the effect; so, calling one of the waiters—a coloured man—I told him to go outside in the hall, remain for five minutes, and then return and deliver the letter, saying that the writer would call for a

reply during the day. I also instructed the waiter, after giving this reply, to retire quickly, and not be seen again in the hotel until the next day, and that I would make it all right with his employer.

"Agreeably to my orders, in a few minutes the servant walked up to the General and put the letter in his hands. The old gentleman adjusted his spectacles, tore open the envelope, and in an amazed tone commenced to read half aloud, 'Young man, I know thy secret,' and so on. He read it over two or three times, and I never saw anybody more bewildered. At last he called for the head-waiter and demanded to see the servant who had delivered the letter; of course he was not to be found. The longer he pondered, the more he seemed inclined to fly into a passion, and when his breakfast came the storm burst. 'D—n the breakfast!' he exclaimed, almost kicking over the table. 'I want to see the lunatic who calls me a "young man," and says he knows my secret, and can secure the realization of my fondest hopes. I haven't got any secret, and my fondest hope is to kick the idiot who sent me this insane note!'

"During this time two or three ladies had joined me at the breakfast-table, and, noticing the extraordinary excitement of the General, asked me if I knew who he was. I told them to keep very quiet, and not to attract his attention; that he was a fratricide, and an escaped lunatic, whose keepers were outside behind the doors waiting for him, and that the letter was only a decoy to enable them to secure him without any unnecessary violence. This thoroughly alarmed them, and they hurriedly left the table, retreating through the door at the other end of the room.

"At this moment the second head-waiter, who had noticed the agitation of the ladies, walked up to me, and asked if they were not satisfied with the breakfast.

"'Oh yes,' I replied, 'I presume so; but the youngest lady is a dangerous maniac at times, and the instant she saw her father, General So-and-so, disturbed in his mind by the letter she had written, I whispered to her friend to take her out of the room.'

"In a few moments, having finished my break-

fast, I took my own departure. On reaching the office of the hotel, I inquired of one of the principal clerks whether his head-waiter was quite sound in his mind. He asked me my reason for making the inquiry. I said that I didn't want to get my name mixed up in the matter, but it struck me that the one weak point of his intellect was his apparently intense dislike to the General, and I observed, 'If I were you I should just test it by going up to him suddenly, and saying, "Don't you think you will get yourself into trouble about that letter of the General's?"'

"Taking my advice, the clerk walked up to the head-waiter and abruptly put this question to him. Of course the waiter got very much confused, and stammered in endeavouring to make an explanation; whereupon I, who was behind him, intimated by signs to the clerk that he had better get out of the way, as the fellow had a knife about him and might become very violent.

"In the meantime I saw the General approach the office to make inquiries, and in a minute or two there was a tremendous hum of conversation.

Half a dozen men were talking loudly and excitedly together, among whom were the clerk and the two head-waiters. I hastily paid my bill, seized my travelling-bag, jumped into a conveyance at the door, and was driven away. I never learned what was the result, because I never dared to inquire."

I suppose if anything could be called fair game for these wild exploits, it would be the self-sufficient and absolutely irrepressible amateur actor who believes himself to be an Irving, Kendal, and Toole rolled into one. That Sothern thought him so will be seen by the following anecdote.

While taking a short holiday at a sea-side town he was introduced to a gentleman who, having played a few parts in the Theatre Royal Back Drawing-Room, believed himself to be a histrionic genius. With time on his hands, this was just the sort of man that Sothern wanted, and at his expense he at once began to amuse himself.

"My dear fellow," he said to him, after an acquaintance of about twenty-four hours, "there

is no need to tell me that you are a born actor. I can see it in your eyes and bearing, hear it in your voice, read it in your every action. Why, in the name of goodness, do you waste your time here, when in London you would find fame and fortune? It is really the saddest case of 'Born to Blush Unseen' that I have ever known. Why on earth don't you give yourself a chance?"

"Well, yes; but how?" was the answer.

"Why, confound it all, look here," replied Sothern. "Though it's dead against my own interest to say it, if I were you I would engage the theatre in this place, send invitations to all the London managers, and appear as *Othello*. After that you would simply have to name your own terms."

Only too readily the poor conceited amateur actor fell into the trap. The theatre was taken, a company (of some sort) recruited, and, under the supervision of Sothern, Shakespeare's tragedy was (in a fashion) rehearsed. On the evening of the production Sothern called his victim on one side and said to him—

"You are admirable; I don't know when I

watched rehearsals with greater interest; I don't know when I have learnt more lessons than I have while noting your marvellous conception of *Othello*. But you have one fault, which I, as an old actor, may be pardoned for pointing out to you. You don't speak up enough."

"Don't speak up enough!" said the amateur, who had been exercising what he called "his organ" in a manner that was, to say the least of it, remarkable. "Why, all the others declare that I am much too loud!"

"Precisely," was the reply; "and that only just proves what I am saying. Can't you see, my good fellow, that they recognize in you a genius, and that they would like you to make a failure? Now, I, who have your real interest at heart, and mean you to succeed, tell you the truth. To-night I will sit in a box, close to the stage. Keep your eye on me, and when I show my handkerchief raise your voice to its very utmost capacity."

The ambitious one thanked his kind patron, and promised to attend to his instructions. It is easy to see what followed. Led on by the ever-displayed handkerchief, *Othello* roared like

a very bull, to the dismay of those who were playing with him, and to the derision of the audience. In the course of the evening he sent for Sothern and said—

"I'm sure I *must* be loud enough; I'm shouting myself faint; the audience laughs at me. Why do you continue to show that confounded handkerchief?"

Sothern looked at him with a sad smile, and said—

"My dear boy, this is where the old actor comes in. You *think* you are shouting, but, as a matter of fact, you are inaudible. Experience alone can teach the true management of the voice. The laughs of which you complain mean that you cannot be heard. The London critics who, at my request, have specially come down to see you, have just been saying to me, 'You're right about the man; he's got a magnificent stage presence; his poses are unequalled; he's grasped the part better than any one since Kemble died; but, damme, why don't he speak up?' If you don't do so in the next act I'm afraid you're settled."

After the next act the poor mistaken man, who, of course, had acted execrably, *was* settled. With protruded eyeballs, distended veins, and perspiration playing havoc with his blackened face, he bellowed (to the tune of the fluttering handkerchief) until voice and strength forsook him, and, in whispered tones, he told his mentor that "he could not go on any longer." "I was afraid of it," said Sothern; "what a pity! You have all the attributes of a great actor except voice power. Well, it was worth trying. If you could have made yourself heard you would have snuffed us all out. As it is, there is nothing to do but grin and bear it."

Writing of the shouting *Othello* reminds me of an odd and harmless trick that Sothern was fond of trying at a dinner-party. Commencing with a confederate across the table, he would converse in loud and yet louder tones, and this, being continued, became so infectious that at last, to his infinite delight, all present would be shouting, the one to the other, at the very pitch of their voices.

Mr. Toole, ever a great friend of Sothern's,

and a participator in many of his jokes, once agreed with another friend to meet him at one of those old inns in the city where steaks are cooked to the point of perfection. Sothern happening to be first at the meeting-place—a quiet coffee-room in an old-fashioned hostelry—was attracted by the appearance of the only diner, a quaint and sedate-looking elderly gentleman, who, with the air of one well accustomed to the place, was quietly enjoying one of the famous steaks to the accompaniment of a pint of choice port.

Immediately an idea came into his head, and, acting upon it, in his usually impulsive manner, he walked quickly up to the old gentleman and gave him such a hearty slap on the back that, half falling across the table, he sent the succulent steak flying from its dish, and upset the wine-bottle. "How are you, old boy?" said Sothern, extending his hand, and in apparent delight. "I haven't seen you for years. This *is* unexpected! How are they all at home?" "Sir," ejaculated the indignant and choking old gentleman, "what do you mean by taking this liberty? Who are you? I——" Instantly Sothern's mobile face under-

went a change. "My dear sir," he said, in the most apologetic of tones, "I fear I have made a most unpardonable mistake. I thought you were one of the most intimate of my friends, and now I find that I have accosted, nay, assaulted a stranger. I really, my dear sir, don't know what to say to you." Sothern's earnest manner quickly and completely mollified the old gentleman, who, rejecting an offer that the spilt wine should be replaced, cheerfully ordered a second pint bottle, said it was "all a mistake," and resumed his rudely interrupted meal. Sothern left the coffee-room, strolled to the hotel door, and there encountered the man who was to meet Toole and himself. "I am afraid that I am late," said the new-comer. "A little," said Sothern; "but it doesn't matter. Toole hasn't come yet. By the way, should you like to take a part in one of those little jokes of mine about which people talk so much?" This was generally an irresistible temptation, and his friend, falling into the trap, said, "By all means." "To begin with, then," said Sothern, "go into the coffee-room. There you will find an old gentleman busy with his

dinner. Bang him across the back as if you had known him for years, calling out, 'Well, old cock, how are you?' and then make profuse apologies, saying that you have made a mistake." Not seeing much difficulty or danger in this, the friend departed on his errand, and by-and-by returned. "Well," asked Sothern, with the familiar twinkle in his marvellous eye, "how did he take it?" "Not at all well," was the reply. "He's a surly old fellow, and made a tremendous fuss. I'd no idea a man could so lose his temper over what might, after all, have been an excusable mistake. However, he's all right now. I broke his half-bottle of wine, but he let me pay for another, and he's now at work again." At this moment Toole arrived, full of apologies at keeping the others waiting. "It doesn't matter," said Sothern, "especially if you will win me a bet that I have just made." "What is it?" asked Toole. "Why," said Sothern, "in the coffee-room there is a crusty-looking old boy of the John Bull pattern, evidently an *habitué* of the place, pecking a steak, and sipping a pint of port, and I've just told our friend here that when you came I'd get you to go

and give him a rouser in the back, send him sprawling on to the table on top of his steak and his wine, just as if he was your dearest friend. This man bets me a fiver that you daren't do it." "What nonsense!" said Toole. "There's nothing in that. I'll do it at once, because, of course, I can make it up with an immediate and complete apology." Off went Toole to the coffee-room, and from thence there soon came the sound of the loud voice of an elderly gentleman boiling over with indignation, the sharp ringing of bells, and a great cry for the landlord. Stopping that individual in the passage, Sothern said, "I'm sorry this should have happened. Mr. Toole, the comedian, is in the coffee-room, and I have reason to believe that he is wantonly insulting one of your oldest customers." Then, passing quickly into the street, he hailed a cab, and, in the best of spirits, drove away.

Dr. Westland Marston tells the famous story of Sothern and the undertaker as follows:—

"One of the best anecdotes of him is that which tells of a visit to a furnishing undertaker, from whom he ordered, on a most elaborate scale,

all that was necessary for a funeral. Before the preparations could have gone far he reappeared with great solicitude to ask how they were progressing. Again, at a brief interval, he presented himself, with an anxious face, to inquire when he could count upon possession of the body—a question which naturally amazed the undertaker, who was at a loss to discover his meaning. 'Of course you provide the body,' said Sothern, coming to his enlightenment. 'The body!' stammered the bewildered undertaker. 'Why, do you not say,' exclaimed the actor, exhibiting a card of the shop, '"All things necessary for funerals promptly supplied"? Is not a body the very first necessity?'"

Although it appeared in the days of his impaired health, the following extraordinary story contributed, with his name attached to it, to the 1878 Christmas number of the New York *Spirit of the Times*, may suitably be added to this chapter on "Sothern in High Spirits."

"AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF A PAGAN BABY,

BY

E. A. SOTHERN.

"The little story I am about to relate will possess a special interest for those who, like myself, have occupied some portion of their leisure in the fascinating yet perplexing study of metempsychosis. It will, doubtless, surprise many to whom I am known only as an amusing—perhaps not invariably amusing—performer on the dramatic stage, to learn that I have, for more than thirty years, devoted my spare moments to the investigation of this phenomenon, on the severest lines of the analytic and inductive system of the ancients. But in this duplex development of activity I am not alone. If the public only knew as much as I do of the inner and separate lives of those whom the public so liberally establishes as favourites, people would cease to regard the *farceur* only as a *farceur*, the entertainer only as an entertainer, the comedian only as a comedian and might now and then catch a glimpse of the

philosopher's robe beneath the gaudy garments of 'the poor player, who struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more.'

"Will my readers pardon me if, for one serious moment, I occupy their attention with a simple statement of the signification which, it appears to me, should inexorably attach to the doctrine of metempsychosis? It may make more clear the true bearing of the singular story which I have undertaken to write for the Christmas *Spirit*. Inductive philosophy, if it teaches us anything, surely establishes as an eternal axiom that physical promptings cannot, with impunity, be disregarded. I do not overlook or undervalue the importance—the sad importance—of unconquerable Force, with all the cruel conditions that follow in its wake. The logic of facts impels us irresistibly to this conclusion. Nothing in nature is more certain; and those who refer to supernatural characteristics the overmastering instincts of elementary humanity, will inevitably eventuate in that deep and discordant chaos into which the daring mind must fall, which defiantly assumes to limit the sphere of the material man to an inco-

herent effort to give efficient expression to the Infinite and the Eternal. I ask pardon for this digression, but it was necessary. What follows will now be more clearly understood, and more fully comprehended.

"In the month of October, 187—, I was sitting on the balcony of a small hotel in the town of ——. I think it better, in the interest of persons still living, that I should not give the names of places which might be identified. It was a calm evening; the leaves were falling and fluttering to earth, sad emblems of the perennial decay of nature to which all life submits. A grey-bearded, aged man, wearing a fez cap, was silently smoking on an adjacent chair. His Orientalism was patent, but the diagnosis of his nationality was sufficiently difficult. With a lazy effort of careless curiosity, I addressed him, making a remark on the beauty of the weather; but he smoked on tranquilly without moving his head. I concluded from his silence that he was not familiar with French, German, or Italian, and was equally unacquainted with the somewhat unmusical English tongue. My knowledge of

Arabic, I regret to say, is limited to a few every-day phrases, and these too were unavailing to arouse the absorbed attention of my neighbour. I tried him in Telegu, of which I speak a few words, with no better result. Piqued by his silence and my own failure, I summoned up all the Chinese I had acquired when I was in San Francisco and Sacramento, and was agreeably relieved when, at once throwing off his languor, and beaming with vivacity and animation, he drew his chair toward me, and, fixing his eyes on mine, spoke rapidly in that language for several minutes. His accent was peculiar, a kind of Perso-Copt intonation permeating his delivery, and he made frequent employment of idiomatic phrases which I readily recognized as characteristics of the Cantonese; but I understood him perfectly, and we were soon engaged in a most agreeable conversation, in which, I must modestly admit, he took a principal part.

"Conversation begat confidence, and he told me the story of his life. He was born in the village of Hi-Ho, near the sources of the well-known 'Yellow River.' His father was a maker

of wooden pattens, used by the Chinese in damp weather as a needful defence against the humidity of the country. Like all Chinese of his social standing, his own impoverished condition was no hindrance to his parental ambition. He was fully imbued with those sentiments of equality which are so remarkable a feature in the social and political condition of China, where the extremes of republican theory and dynastic autocracy seem to coexist not inharmoniously. Ground to the earth by sordid poverty, living in a chronic state of semi-starvation, ignorant as a pair of his own pattens, A chi cherished the confident aspiration that one day a son would be born to him in his mud-cabin who would rise to the loftiest pinnacle of state in the empire. In this hope he was justified, and in this expectation he was not disappointed. The day arrived, and an infant was placed in his arms on whose yet undeveloped features the fond father could trace, with the eye of ambition and exultation, the stamp of future greatness.

"It is a trite remark that, in ethics, evil is but a consequence of good; sorrow gives birth to joy;

memory changes into misery; what is a blessing to-day may be a curse to-morrow. There is evidence to warrant the opinion that these conclusions are not fortuitous nor accidental, but are the outcome of a remorseless logic, rooted in Fact alone.

"I myself have never yielded to an absolute acquiescence to the doctrine of Confucius, so ably expounded in his eleventh book of his 'Moral Propositions.' Yet in the career of the young Chinese whose story I am relating, we might discern a confirmation of all the great Chinese apostle has advanced, if we could only abstract our confidence from vague speculations, and bind it rigorously down by the iron bands of reason, and reason alone.

"But I wander from my story. Passing rapidly through the communal schools of the district, and the College of Canton, the son of A-chi, who as yet had received no distinctive name, for reasons which will appear hereafter, reached the academic acme of Chinese acquirement, the Athenæum of Pekin, where his grand effort was to be made. His remarkable career had already attracted

general notice, and a report of his splendid talents had been made to the Grand Central Commissioner of Education, and had even reached the Imperial chamber itself. Naturally, when the culminating epoch had arrived, and the son of A-chi, the patten-maker of Hi-Ho, entered the Examination Hall, and, with elaborate ceremonial, was inducted into the secluded apartment from which he would emerge, after many days, either first of the first, with all China at his feet, or a broken and humiliated creature, the excitement was very great. Never before had a youth of such promise passed the venerable portals. The destiny of the very empire itself might hang on the issue of the trial. Every precaution was adopted; chosen guards were stationed at the door and relieved night and day. All access to the outer world and its human sympathies was jealously cut off. The son of A-chi was alone with himself and with Fate.

"*From that hour to this he has never been heard of.* The story is told. The reader will draw his own conclusions. I have my theory, which must for ever be kept secret. Nothing would

induce me to divulge it, or even give a clue to the solution of the tremendous mystery. The consequence might be too dreadful. One word, and one word only, I may venture to add. This story is literally true. On that I stake my credit and my reputation. But if there be—as I firmly believe there are—minds so acute that they can, as it were, with an inverted eye, glance in 'behind the veil,' there they may trace the mighty workings of those eternal principles which have been to me an inexpressible consolation, and have impressed deep on my soul the assured conviction that we are happy because we are good, that everything is nothing, and that virtue is its own reward."

The editor of the *Spirit of the Times* says, in an "editorial note" in his leading columns: "We regard that incident in a pagan baby's life as Sothern's latest and most stupendous joke. If any reader can inform us what the incident was, or where the pagan baby comes in, his penetration exceeds ours. In this production we can only fancy that Sothern intends to represent the inconsequential intellect of *Dundreary* when grap-

pling with metaphysical or psychological themes. There is no more connection between the title and what follows it than there is between the question and answer to one of 'My Lord's' most feeble conundrums. The reader begins the article with the thought that Sothern intends to be serious for once, but as he proceeds he finds himself wallowing in a bog of high-sounding inanity, and emerges from the perusal without an idea remaining. What Sothern means by it should be added to the *World's* list of questions."

Sothern's friends will remember his odd and irresistible way of sending out an invitation. "Don't forget," he would write on a prodigious number of post-cards, "that you breakfast with me at twelve o'clock on Sunday, the — inst." Each recipient of the communication would probably jump to the conclusion that he had made an appointment which he had forgotten, accept this as a reminder, and make a very special point of keeping his supposed engagement. And when he found himself under Sothern's roof, and in the presence of a veritable

host of mutual friends, he would have occasion to remember not only the quaint invitation but his unbounded hospitality.

Sothern's elaborately planned practical jokes were never absolutely complete to him unless he contrived to get them noticed in a newspaper. On the face of it this looks like a desire for advertisement; but I do not believe that this had anything to do with it. He knew a good deal about newspapers, and was fully alive to the fact that those who have to do with them are generally on the alert. When he could, to use his own words, "sell an editor," his joy was supreme. A remarkably successful effort in this direction (although the cutting is before me I may be excused from mentioning the name of the paper from which it was taken) runs as follows :—

"A Crazy Admirer.

"*Singular Conduct in a Theatre.*

"At the Canterbury Theatre, the other evening, Mr. Sothern and Mr. Sefton's London

Company were performing 'David Garrick,' the principal lady part in which was filled by Miss Amy Roselle, a very graceful and pleasing young actress. Shortly before the curtain rose, a pretty little bouquet of snowdrops and green leaves was left at the stage door, with a note addressed to Miss Roselle, couched in terms of admiration, but perfectly respectful and polite. The writer said he had come from Tunbridge Wells to see Miss Roselle act once more, and offered 'the few first flowers of spring' for her acceptance, hoping she would wear them. There was nothing in this to create much surprise, such floral tributes to pretty and popular actresses being not uncommon. Miss Roselle wore the snowdrops in the opening act of the play, during the course of which a second note, this time written in pencil, but on the same kind of paper, was delivered at the stage door. This epistle was more ardent, and induced a suspicion of the perfect sanity of the writer, which was turned into certainty by what followed. During the second act a third note found its way to the green-room, and this time the undisciplined feelings of the swain had found

vent in poetry. The following lines were enclosed :—

'I'll dream of thee to-night, Roselle,
I'll dream of thee to-night;
Thy face will haunt my dreams, Roselle,
Though absent from my sight;
My love for thee no words can tell,
My own, my beautiful Roselle!
F. R. M.'

The writer said he was occupying a stall, the number of which he indicated. At the end of the play Miss Roselle found awaiting her a fourth letter with a parcel. The former contained a most enthusiastic declaration of ardent affection, referred to the writer's large properties in the West Indies, and solicited permission to present to her the accompanying example of the produce of an estate in Havanna—the said 'example' proving on examination to be an enormous piece of sugar-stick, literally *stick*, for it was upwards of two feet long, and fully an inch thick. The sender of the singular token said he was in mourning for his mother, and that, however peculiar his conduct might appear, he really was not mad, though false friends said he was. In a

postscript he added that he now was going to purchase something which he hoped Miss Roselle would wear for his sake. In about a quarter of an hour a fifth letter was handed in, containing a soft parcel. When this was examined it proved to be a penny packet of egg powder for making custards, and a statement that he who placed this token at her fair feet was ready to die for her if necessary. By this time there was no room for doubt as to there being a lunatic among the audience, and a watch being set, a respectably attired and gentlemanly-looking man, with a very wild eye and excited demeanour, was remarked in the back of the pit. Just as the last piece—in which Miss Roselle did not appear—was being played, this person was observed to jump up and down, and to throw his arms about wildly; but the officials of the theatre being prepared, he was at once quietly but firmly removed, without attracting the attention of the audience. He went away perfectly quiet, and without remonstrance or resistance, from which it may be concluded he was the author of the extraordinary series of letters, and the sender

of the still more extraordinary tokens of admiration which we have described. Not being known by any one about the theatre, it is supposed that he had really, as he said, come over from Tunbridge Wells."

The whole of this ridiculous story is perfectly true up to the period of the presentation of the egg powder. So far, Sothern, in one of his wild moods, could easily plan it; but there was no madman in the stalls, and no scene in the pit, and no removal of any one. After the performance was over Sothern invited the editor of the country paper to chat with him in the hotel in which he was staying, and, talking over "the strange occurrences of the evening," very easily induced him to ask a friend who was present to write an account of them for his paper. Then a subsequent paragraph went the round of the papers to the effect that this same "lunatic lover" would go to the theatres in which Miss Roselle appeared, "dressed all in blue, with a packet of Borwick's baking powder ready to throw at the feet of the object of his adoration," and Sothern was perfectly happy. I do not think that until many years later on Miss

Amy Roselle (now Mrs. Arthur Dacre, and under whose permission I publish this anecdote) knew that she had been the victim of a hoax.

In America, Sothern seemed to find newspaper reports of his ridiculous escapades easier to obtain than in England, and that, in his odd way, he set great store by them is proved by his own carefully kept scrap-book, which still exists. Again let me say that I do not believe that Sothern did these things for the sake of notoriety. No actor was ever more keenly alive to the commercial value in these advertising days of legitimate (perhaps I ought to add, and illegitimate) advertisement, and to obtain one I have known him do extraordinary things (such as giving a sovereign to a railway porter, where sixpence would have sufficed, so that he might talk to his comrades of the munificence of Sothern, and set them thinking they would go and see this auriferous being on the stage); but with him these jokes were a thing apart, that satisfied some curious want in his restless nature. He did not retain a single advertisement of his stage performances, but he carefully cherished the records of his *diablerie*. Let me quote from his scrap-book.

During one of his American engagements (it was in 1878) he inveigled some one into writing to the *Inter Ocean* as follows :—

"Is Mr. Sothern a medium? This is the question that fifteen puzzled investigators are asking themselves this morning, after witnessing a number of astounding manifestations at a private *séance* given by Mr. Sothern last night.

"It lacked a few minutes of twelve when a number of Mr. Sothern's friends, who had been given to understand that something remarkable was to be performed, assembled in the former's rooms at the Sherman House, and took seats in a circle around a marble-top table which was placed in the centre of the apartment. On the table were a number of glasses, two very large bottles, and five lemons. A sprightly young gentleman attempted to crack a joke about spirits being confined in the bottles, but the company frowned him down, and for once Mr. Sothern had a sober audience to begin with.

"There was a good deal of curiosity regarding the object of the gathering, but no one was able to explain. Each gentleman testified to the fact

that Mr. Sothern's agent had waited upon him, and solicited his presence at a little exhibition to be given by the actor, *not* of a comical nature.

"Mr. Sothern himself soon after appeared, and, after shaking hands with the party, thus addressed them:—

"'Gentlemen, I have invited you here this evening to witness a few manifestations, demonstrations, tests, or whatever you choose to call them, which I have accidentally discovered that I am able to perform.

"'I am a fire-eater, as it were. (*Applause.*) I used to *dread* the fire, having been scorched once when an innocent child. (*A laugh.*) I hope there will be no levity here, and I wish to say now that demonstrations of any kind are liable to upset me, while demonstrations of particular kinds may upset the audience.'

"Silence and decorum being restored, Mr. Sothern thus continued:—

"'Thirteen weeks ago, while walking up Greenwich Street in New York, I stepped into a store to buy a cigar. To show you there was no trick about it, here are cigars out of the same box

from which I selected the one that I that day lighted.'

"Here Mr. Sothern passed round a box of tolerable cigars.

"'Well! I stepped to the little hanging gas-jet to light it, and, having done so, stood contemplatively holding the cigar and the gas-jet in either hand, thinking what a saving it would be to smoke a pipe, when, in my absent-mindedness, I dropped the cigar and put the gas-jet into my mouth. Strange as it may appear, I felt no pain, and stood there holding the thing in my mouth and puffing, until the man in charge yelled out to me that I was swallowing his gas. Then I looked up, and sure enough there I was, pulling away at the slender flame that came from the glass tube.

"'I dropped it instantly and felt my mouth, but noticed no inconvenience or unpleasant sensation whatever.

"'"What do you mean by it?" asked the proprietor.

"'As I didn't know what I meant by it I couldn't answer, so I picked up my cigar and

went home. Once there, I tried the experiment again, and in doing so I found that not only my mouth, but my hands and face, indeed, all my body, was proof against fire. I called on a physician, and he examined me and reported nothing wrong with my flesh, which appeared to be in its normal condition. I said nothing about it publicly, but the fact greatly surprised me, and I have invited you here to-night to witness a few experiments.'

"Saying this, Mr. Sothern, who had lit a cigar while pausing in his speech, turned the fire-end into his mouth, and sat down smoking unconcernedly.

"'I suppose you wish to give us the fire test?' remarked one of the company.

"Mr. Sothern nodded.

"There was probably a company never more dumfounded than that present in the room. A few questions were asked, and then five gentlemen were appointed to examine Mr. Sothern's hands, etc., before he began his experiments. Having thoroughly washed the parts that he proposed to subject to the flames, Mr. Sothern began

by baring his arm, and passing it through the gas-jet very slowly, twice stopping the motion, and holding it still in the flames. He then picked up a poker with a sort of hook on the end, and proceeded to fish a small coil of wire from the grate. The wire came out fairly white with heat. Mr. Sothern took the coil in his hands and coolly proceeded to wrap it round his left leg to the knee. Having done so, he stood on the table in the centre of the circle, and requested the committee to examine the wrappings and the leg, and report if both were there. The committee did so, and reported in the affirmative.

"While this was going on there was a smile, almost seraphic in its beauty, on Sothern's face.

"After this, an enormous iron, in the shape of a horse-shoe, was brought in, and after being heated red-hot was placed over his neck and shoulders like a horse-collar, where it cooled, and was taken off without leaving a sign of a burn.

"As a final test a tailor's goose was put on the coals, and, after being thoroughly heated, was placed on Mr. Sothern's chair. The latter lighted a fresh cigar, and then coolly took his

seat on the goose without the least seeming inconvenience. During the last experiment, Mr. Sothern sang in excellent taste and voice, 'I'm sitting on the stile, Mary.'

"The question now is, were the fifteen auditors of Mr. Sothern fooled and deceived, or was this a genuine manifestation of extraordinary power? Sothern is such an inveterate joker that he may have put the thing upon the boys for his own amusement, but if so it was one of the nicest tricks ever witnessed by,

"Yours truly,

"ONE OF THE COMMITTEE.

"P.S.—What is equally marvellous to me is that the fire didn't burn his clothes where it touched them, any more than his flesh."

Although he inserted this remarkable communication, the editor of the *Inter Ocean* seems to "have had his doubts," for he adds in a footnote :—

["There is nothing new in this. Mr. Sothern has long been known as one of the most expert jugglers in the profession. Some years ago he

gained the soubriquet of 'the Fire King.' He frequently amuses his friends by eating fire, though he long since ceased to give public exhibitions. Probably the success of the experiments last night was largely owing to the presence of the lemons. There is a good deal of trickery in those same lemons."]

The ubiquitous American interviewer was no doubt considered by Sothern as the fairest of fair game for his "sells." Here is an account that he gave to one of them of the origin of "The Crushed Tragedian," the original creation of H. J. Byron:—

"'"The Crushed Tragedian,"' said Mr. Sothern, 'presents a character that I discovered under very quaint circumstances about five years since, while travelling in a carriage of the Midland Railway of England. My only companion was an extrordinary creature, whose reproduction is the *Fitzaltamont* of the play. Shortly after the train started the stranger who had been suspiciously restless rose to his feet and began pacing the carriage, muttering deeply the while. As his frenzy increased, I became alarmed, and speculated upon the chances of jumping through

the window. Just as the train reached the mouth of a tunnel, the fellow seized me by the arm. I, wide awake, but terrified, struck him a blow between the eyes, knocking him down, and as I knelt upon his chest I asked him, with natural asperity, what the devil he wanted. The luckless wretch, gasping for breath, whispered, "Wanted? Why, I wanted you to buy a box for my benefit at Birmingham." This,' he concluded, 'was the original Crushed Tragedian.' I asked Mr. Sothern if he bought the box, and although he made me no answer, I am satisfied that when the genuine and since counterfeit articles separated, there was enough crisp paper in the pocket of a certain threadbare vest to buy something more than a bottle of arnica."

Another interviewer, not quite so easily taken in, had the laugh of Sothern by publishing his nonsense as follows :—

"I believe I mentioned Mr. Sothern's hesitation in saying anything about himself. I had great difficulty in overcoming it, but finally succeeded in worming out of him certain remarkable facts in his history which enable me

to give you a succinct biography, which, in the event of his death, can be built upon and serve as an obituary. The facts that I give you, although a trifle different from the public belief in regard to the gentleman, I can vouch for as strictly correct, for I gained every line of my information from himself. Mr. Sothern claims to be a Turk. The newspaper reports that have been widely circulated to the effect that he is a Russian, he indignantly denies, and states that they are utterly untrue. I have, in addition to his own statement, other good authority for this, and I am satisfied that he is a Turk. He was born in Constantinople on the fourth day of March, 1829. This was the year when the celebrated—but I am wandering from my topic. His early youth was only remarkable for his failure to distinguish himself. This, however, he hopes to overcome. He has done more to annihilate the institution of the harem than any other Moslem on the stage. His father, as every one is aware, was a Russian. His mother was a Polish exile. His early life was passed in Tartary, hence his extraordinary knowledge of

languages, and his passionate appetite for Siberian crab-apples and tonic beer. It seems sad to learn that he contemplates leaving the stage, but with his peculiar vein of humour there is, when I think of it, no reason why he should not make a successful undertaker. He informs me that at the close of his engagement in Baltimore he will proceed at once to Pekin, China, where he has made a brief engagement at the Royal Opera House. He also contemplates a visit to Africa and Eastern Shore, Maryland. His object in visiting the latter section of the country is to be on hand when, under existing laws, a vacancy exists for United States senator. He is now making arrangements with George Francis Train, Benjamin F. Butler, and Henry Ward Beecher, for a course of instruction to fit him to become a member of the second branch of the Baltimore city council, where he intends making his political *début.* With these few remarks with regard to Mr. Sothern, I will close by saying, 'Truth is often stranger than fiction.'"

On being "interviewed" concerning the "fire test," and a "challenge" that had been sent him

in connection therewith, Sothern sent for the manager of the hotel in which he was staying, and in which the so-called experiments had been carried on, and said—

"Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll send for an ironmonger and have the floor plated with boiler iron, if you will allow me to build a furnace in the centre of the room. I merely want to make the test. I don't want to bet, because then I should feel as if I were swindling somebody. I have never tried this, but I feel perfectly sure of the result."

"What do you want with the furnace?" asked the hotel manager.

"I will permit myself," said Sothern, "to be imbedded in a mass of any kind of fuel my challenger may select—tar barrels, and resin, *ad libitum*. Then I will allow any member of a committee to apply the torch."

"Isn't that going a little too far, Mr. Sothern?" asked the newspaper interviewer.

"Well, I may be mistaken," replied Sothern. "but I feel sure of the result—sure of it. At all events, I will give ten thousand dollars to any

charitable fund in this city if I do not come out unscathed."

"What!" exclaimed the hotel manager, with his eyes like saucers.

"Provided," continued Sothern, "*that my challenger will undergo the same test at the same time*—neither of us to remain in the furnace more than fifteen minutes after the whole mass of fuel shall be in flames, and both of us to be perfectly nude."

This point of the question having been settled, the interviewer went on—

"Have you ever, Mr. Sothern, submitted yourself to any other tests?"

"Oh yes; I once played six weeks in Philadelphia during the Exhibition, with the thermometer in my dressing-room at 128."

How he showed up the tricks of a professional mesmerist is in the *Chicago Tribune* thus recorded:—

"A few days since, Mr. Sothern, who is often credited with being a spiritual medium, but who is in reality a 'hard-shell' sceptic in regard to all such matters, invited Mr. Carpenter to his rooms in the Sherman House, for the purpose

of testing his powers. Favourable enough conditions were named, but Mr. Carpenter saw fit to postpone the *séance* till yesterday afternoon, when a select party of some fifteen people—at least one-third of them being ladies—were present. If sincerity of purpose can be named as a favourable condition for such manifestations, the Professor could certainly have found no cause to object. It was not one of Sothern's 'sells' by any means. The company were one and all prepared to be convinced, and they submitted to the manipulations of the operator very readily. But, alas! one after another persisted in declining to keep their eyes closed after being commanded to do so. There was not one who would see snakes in canes, or babies in broomhandles, or perform any funny tricks at the bidding of the magician. The Professor suddenly discovered that he had struck an obstinate crowd of folks who had no object in being duped.

"Ah! yes; there was *one*,—an uninvited guest,—a very young man of mild aspect, with dreamy eyes and uncertain features, who had come into the room almost unobserved. He

turned out to be a friend of Mr. Carpenter's. The mesmerist, after making futile passes over the eyes of all the rest, suddenly found in the eyes of the young person a remarkably sensitive organization. He mesmerised him in five seconds. He made him nearly tumble off a piano stool; he caused him to stiffen his arms; he invited the company to pinch his hands, which, he claimed, were dead to the sense of touch. It would have been a convincing test to an ordinary audience, but it was a very ill-disguised case of confederacy to all the guests in the room.

"Mr. Sothern took a brass pin from one of the ladies and deliberately bored it through the lobe of his own ear, never changing a muscle. 'Now,' he said, 'you can stick a knife through my hand, and I won't flinch. I can do that awake. Is that any proof of your powers?'

"The Professor gave it up, and the young man sat down rather sheepishly. Mr. Carpenter, of course, claimed, as most spiritual mediums do, that the physical and atmospheric conditions were unfavourable, and so forth. The *séance* proved to be a conspicuous failure, as *séances* generally

do in the presence of a company of intelligent people, unless with the aid of intelligent confederates. The inference is that the people who so amused the audience at Mr. Carpenter's *séance* at the Theatre last Sunday had had a careful rehearsal of their parts before they went on to the stage to make fools of themselves. There may be something in mesmerism, but there is evidently something in Mr. Carpenter's operations that calls for investigation by believers, if believers can be persuaded to doubt at all.

"At the close of the exhibition Mr. Sothern mesmerised the entire company, one after another, in a manner which would have convinced any audience that he possessed supernatural power, did they not know,—what turned out to be the fact,—that by a clever contrivance of the arch-juggler every member of the party was trying to fool each other. This may not be the whole secret of mesmerism; but 'confedding,' as Sothern calls it, evidently constitutes an important element in the operations of Mr. Carpenter. When next he gives an exhibition, it may be well to interview his 'subjects,' and find out who they are,

and what inducements they had to go out of their minds for the amusement of the public."

An escapade that gained for Sothern the doubtful notoriety of an awful illustration in an *Illustrated Police News*, entitled, "Sothern the Comedian, and the Ruffian Intruder," and in which the soul of this inveterate practical joker absolutely revelled, was thus reported in a Californian paper: "We have already informed our readers that Mr. Sothern, during his trip from New York, had got into some little trouble on the cars. Our reporter called on Mr. Sothern, but was unable to see him. Our reporter then interviewed the conductor. It appears that Mr. Towne had the thoughtful courtesy to telegraph to Ogdon to the effect that Mr. Sothern was to have the sole use of the directors' car. Mr. Sothern appreciated the kind compliment, and telegraphed his thanks. The following morning, however, he discovered a six-feet-twoer calmly stretched on his sofa, coolly smoking his cigars, and sipping his iced claret. Mr. Sothern suggested, in the gentlest terms, that the big stranger had made a slight mistake, as the car was a private one. 'Private

be hanged!' exclaimed the stalwart stranger. 'It's big enough for a dozen thin fellows like you!' 'Possibly,' replied Mr. Sothern; 'but as you have not even the politeness to apologize for the intrusion, I request you to leave it.' 'Not if I know it,' ejaculated the brawny stranger. Enter the conductor. *Conductor:* 'Now then, sir; please to move to your own seat.' *Mysterious stranger:* 'If either of you bother me any longer, I'll knock your heads together and pitch you out of the car. It's only going twenty-five miles an hour, and it won't hurt much.' *Sothern (coolly taking his coat off):* 'Come, this is getting interesting. Conductor, sit down and do a gentle smoke whilst I endeavour to bring our large friend to his senses.' Conductor sits and smokes. Gloomy stranger rises, glares, and makes a rush at Sothern, hitting him a blow on the mouth. 'There, that settles the matter,' says the stranger. 'Not quite,' replied Sothern; and, playfully giving him one, two, three, on the eyes, nose, and mouth, closes with him, and sends him spinning over the rail at the end of the car. The alarm is given, and the train stops. The

mysterious stranger is picked up insensible, bleeding at the nose, ears, and mouth. Sothern relinquishes the private car to him. A doctor on the train attends to him, and says, 'A compound fracture.' He still lies in extreme danger; but the verdict of every one is, 'Served him right.'"

Concerning the exact truth of this adventure, Sothern was always reticent. There was, beyond all doubt, a noisy struggle in a railway carriage between him and what looked very like a man,—and a something wearing coat, waistcoat, and trousers was by him hurled from the train,—but it is quite certain that he never in that way took, or nearly took, the life of a fellow-creature. The story, however, got about and was implicitly believed. The coarsely executed engraving, showing Sothern wrestling with a veritable giant, is in its way delicious, and at the time of its appearance gave him infinite delight.

Another "illustrated" episode, which appeared in a similar publication, was entitled, "Farewell Appearance of Mr. Sothern at an Unlicensed Performance on Ramsgate Sands. An Acrobat Discomfited," and was described as follows:—

"Considerable excitement was caused on Ramsgate Sands the other morning by the appearance of a man with his arms tied behind him, raving and shouting at the top of his voice, and a crowd around him convulsed with laughter. The man was, it seems, a travelling mountebank, performing what he called the rope trick; and on the morning in question he had offered himself to be tied up by any of the bystanders. Mr. Sothern, the comedian, passing at the time, determined to try upon him the effect of his celebrated 'Tom Fool Knot.' The success of it was proved beyond doubt by the acrobat stamping about for an hour with fruitless endeavours to get loose, when Mr. Sothern took compassion on him and undid his bonds."

This anecdote was founded on absolute fact.

I will conclude a chapter which, if I related all the jokes in which Sothern acted as principal or took part, might be spun out into a goodly sized volume, with an account of one (I am afraid it has often been told before) eminently characteristic of him. At a dinner-party in his own house, at which ten gentlemen were present,

his friend and sometime agent, Mr. English, was apparently unexpectedly announced. Sothern immediately appealed to his guests to conceal themselves under the dinner-table, declaring that they would "sell" English in a manner beyond all precedent. His compliant friends at once fell in with his request, and Mr. English, coming into the room, sat down by Sothern, and, without taking any notice of the vacant chairs or the disordered table, began leisurely to discuss the business that had brought him to the house. Sothern on his part said nothing about his guests, until one by one, tired with their position under the table, and quite unable to see where the humour of the situation came in, they crawled out, took their seats, and the interrupted dinner went on. Neither Sothern nor his agent (of course he was on this occasion also his accomplice) took the slightest notice of them, and to the end of their days they will fail to see how it was that "English was sold."

I have now said enough concerning these elaborately contrived, humorous, but generally unsatisfactory, and sometimes almost pitiless

undertakings. I ought, however, to add that whereas Sothern's delight in recounting them knew no bounds, his remorse when he felt that through them he had annoyed a friend was limitless. The handsome presents that, the joke being over, he would lavish upon his victims must have cost him a small fortune of what may fittingly be termed conscience-money.

Of his many quaint methods of advertising I give an example in the accompanying facsimile of a note on the "Bank of Dundreary," at one time in extensive circulation.

Bank of Dundreary. No. 2840

No. 2840 to Pay on No. 2840 the sum of Five Pounds if the Holder of this note can give the requisite information about "Brother Sam" or his "Old Nurse".

April 1863

Five

Alex. Henderson.

PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE,

Liverpool.

CONCLUSION.

The later years of Sothern's restless and overcrowded life were more or less sad ones; but he was the last to see that, under an undue strain of work and worry, his health was giving way.

"It is impossible," he wrote, "for me to explain what a staggerer it was when Sir William Jenner and Professor Simpson quietly handed me their opinion of my case. A second opinion was given to-day, which was precisely the same as the first one; but the whole affair has worried me so much that I made up my mind that I *would* carry out my engagements, *whatever* the result. I, myself, still can't believe that I am as ill as the doctors think. I know and feel that I want rest; but I believe it's purely overwork, and that I shall pull through, for my constitution is

IRON,

i.e. it *was!*"

And so, for a while, he struggled on; but in a few months the iron constitution by which he had set so much store, and which he had so sorely tried, failed him, and in July, 1880, he addressed the following letter to the New York *Spirit of the Times*, in explanation of his inability to fulfil his American engagements:—

"I have been, and still am, dangerously ill, and am under charge of a celebrated physician in such nervous complaints, but so weak that I can scarcely crawl from room to room. The doctor says he believes he can cure me. I do not—but that doesn't seem to signify. I know that I have as many lives as a cat,—but possibly this may be my ninth."

Alas! he was in his forebodings only too accurate, and after months of patiently-borne suffering he died, on Thursday, January 21, 1881, at his then London residence, in Vere Street, Cavendish Square.

"Sothern," it was then truthfully written, "was looked upon during the days of his best health and strength as public property, and when his work was done there was scarcely any form

of society, from Bohemia to Belgravia, where there was not a cordial and courteous welcome for one who added to his refinement of manner all those qualities that are summed up in what the world calls a 'good fellow.' Such incitements and excitements tell, however, upon constitutions, however strong and elastic. Nervous temperaments stand these tests pretty well; but in the case of this genial and accomplished actor, wit, wag, and boon companion, never at rest—now in the hunting-field or whipping some salmon-stream when he was not rehearsing on the stage; at one time starring in New York, at another back again in England—cosmopolitan in every sense of the word, age came prematurely. His hair whitened and his back was bowed before his first half-century was passed, and after a long and distressing illness his case took a hopeless turn."

Southampton Cemetery, the spot where, in accordance with his own wish, he was put to rest, is an ideal burying-ground. Very beautiful did it look on the wintry Wednesday following his death, with its snow-covered ground and tomb-

stones, and hoar-frost bedecked trees; and as the lamented actor was lowered into his grave the sun shone brightly down and helped to form a picture which the ten friends who accompanied his sons to the grave-side are not likely to forget. It seemed but a small gathering that had assembled to pay the last mark of affection and respect to one so universally regretted, but the privacy and simplicity of the ceremony were strictly in accordance with his wishes and his well-known detestation of the ghastly paraphernalia which accompany too many of our English funerals. Time and place had, of course, prevented many, and especially his brother-actors, from being present; but the utter absence of the ordinary crowd of gaping, curious idlers would have been after his own heart. He was surrounded by a few for whom he cared, and who took comfort in the fact that his eager, restless spirit had found rest, and in the thought that—

> "He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
> Envy, and calumny, and hate, and pain,
> And that unrest which men miscall delight
> Can touch him not, and torture not again."

In the history of the stage Sothern's name will perpetually live. Among his friends he will, while they have life, be remembered as one of the kindliest and most affectionate of men.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

Since the publication of the foregoing Memoir of Edward Askew Sothern, many exceedingly welcome communications have reached me from those who, at various stages of his checkered stage career, knew the gifted comedian whose life I have endeavoured to narrate. Some of these are of public interest, and I am glad of the opportunity that the issue of this edition gives me to add them to my work.

Of the early Weymouth appearance that called forth the critical letter from Charles Kean with which my first chapter opens, Mr. Rowland Thomas, of Weymouth, writes me—

"You make slight mention of his appearance at Weymouth, from whence he went to Portsmouth. It happened that the box plan of the Weymouth Theatre was kept at the shop where I

then carried on my business. 'Douglas Stuart' (Sothern's then *nom de théâtre*) came a day or two before the company from Jersey, and being in a fix about some lodgings that he had taken, I offered him the use of my own rooms until he could go to them. I mention these matters to show that I knew him, and always found him very gentlemanly in all his actions. Now for the incident that I believe was the cause of his going to America. One day he said to me that business was very bad, and asked me if I could not get him up a 'bespeak.' I thought of a Mrs. Deering, a member of a family from Kent, then staying here, and a sister of Colonel Yeo, who met with his death in the Crimea. Mrs. Deering consented to help us, and the choice of pieces was left to me. I chose 'The Lady of Lyons,' Sothern playing *Claude Melnotte*, and Mrs. Poole, the manager's wife, *Pauline*. Mr. and Mrs. Deering, with their family and friends, were present, and, as a matter of consequence, there was a good house. A few days afterwards, Mrs. Deering told me that she was an old friend of Mr. Charles Kean's, and that she had written to him and told

him that he must look to his laurels, as a young actor here was playing his parts exceedingly well, and she advised him to come to Weymouth and judge for himself. Then she asked me if I could get the piece put on again, as Kean had promised to come; but, at the same time, she begged me to say nothing to Sothern of the expected visitor. Kean, accompanied by a Colonel Blake, came on a night when the performance was repeated 'by particular desire.' Sothern came to me next day, telling me that his fortune was made, as Kean would no doubt engage him for the Princess's. Subsequently he told me of his bitter disappointment, and his determination to go to America."

Of the American pre-*Dundreary* days little new information reaches me except that one correspondent calls my attention to the fact that Sothern's first appearance as *Armand* in "Camille" was cruelly said to have "every characteristic of a poker except its warmth." I am not surprised that I do not find this notice in Sothern's scrapbook, and I can picture to myself the sensitive and capable young actor writhing under the lash

of a writer who, for the sake of saying a smart thing, ignored legitimate criticism. I do not believe that the so-called "critics" of this stamp ever killed a good actor, but that they have goaded easily affected natures to the verge of despair and madness is beyond all doubt.

Concerning the days that immediately preceded the production of "Our American Cousin" at Laura Keene's Theatre, Mr. S. B. Bancroft, with characteristic kindness and courtesy, writes me as follows :—

"During my visit to New York, as a lad of seventeen, in 1858, I almost lived in the theatres, and saw Sothern play *Littleton Coke* in 'Old Heads and Young Hearts' (which struck my then young judgment as one of his very best performances), *Charles Surface*, *Harry Dornton*, *Young Marlow*, *Captain Absolute*, *Frederick Bramble*, *Charles Courtley* (most amusing), and, for a benefit, part of *Nemours* in 'Louis XI.,' of which I then thought little good. Sothern was a comedian—an eccentric comedian—and a brilliant one. I enclose the old bills. The original Dundreary programme I gave to Sothern in 1863. He was kind to me

then, and I entertain none but warm memories of him."

Mr. Bancroft's interesting "old bills" tell me that Sothern played *Littleton Coke*, *Charles Surface*, *Harry Dornton*, *Captain Absolute*, and *Frederick Bramble*, to the *Bob*, *Crabtree*, *Goldfinch*, *Acres*, and *Dr. Ollapod* of Joseph Jefferson.

Before taking leave of Mr. Bancroft, I shall, with his permission, tell two anecdotes in which Sothern characteristically figures. Prior to its production at the Haymarket, Watts Phillips's play, "The Woman in Mauve," was tried in Liverpool. "It began," says Mr. Bancroft, "well enough, and had amusing bits in it, but it was not a good play. Hare acted the ex-policeman, afterwards taken by Compton. I recall an amusing incident. The leading characters in the second act were joining in the chorus to a song sung by Sothern, Hare beating time with a telescope, which he used throughout the play as a kind of memory of his former truncheon. One night the audience roared with laughter, louder and louder at each successive verse; the actors doubled their exertions, Hare especially, who

attributed part of their enjoyment to the vigorous use of his impromptu *bâton*, when Sothern, who was next to him, suddenly discovered that various articles of costume used by Hare as 'padding' were, one by one, emerging from beneath his coat, and forming an eccentric-looking little heap upon the stage. The audience roared louder than ever, Hare beating time with renewed fierceness, when Sothern whispered, 'Never mind, old fellow; don't take any notice; don't look down!' Of course Hare did look down at once; he saw what had happened, and bolted in confusion, leaving us to finish the scene as best we could without him."

Linking as it does Sothern's name with that of an actor who, then on the threshold of his career, has now equalled him in fame, this little incident is a valuable addition to my story.

Mr. Bancroft's next reminiscence deals with one of Sothern's innumerable practical jokes, and of these some critics have warned me I have already said enough; but it is so good and characteristic, that, at the risk of being charged (like Mr. Hare in "The Woman in Mauve") with undue "padding," I must add it to my store.

"Staying at an hotel near Bangor," says Mr. Bancroft, "Sothern soon found out it was the custom of the oldest resident among the guests for the time being to preside at the little *table d'hôte*, and that it was the rule for the chairman always to say grace. The joker one evening learnt by accident, not long before the dinner-hour, that the visitor who had for some days presided had received a telegram which compelled a hurried packing up and his departure. The spirit of mischief prompted Sothern to send a little note in the name of the landlord to all the other guests, some dozen or fifteen—of course privately and separately—couched in these words: "Our esteemed president, I regret to say, will not be at dinner this evening. May I venture to request you to have the kindness to say grace in his absence? The signal for the same will be two sharp knocks upon the sideboard." The signal, at the proper moment, was of course given by Sothern, who was more than repaid by the glee with which he often told how all the guests rose to a man, as at a word of command, each commencing to pronounce his favourite form of

grace; and then, with all sorts of blundering apologies to each other, they resumed their seats."

Of the much discussed question of the origin of *Lord Dundreary* much has come to hand. Donald Robb writes, "I am afraid that history is after all only a confusion of facts. Joseph Jefferson and Lester Wallack are both quoted as saying that Sothern 'gagged' the part of *Dundreary;* but the latter claims that it was first done while he, Sothern, was playing with Laura Keene. A good many years ago Sothern was manager of the Theatre Royal at Halifax, Nova Scotia. I can see the old home of the players now, with its not very florid outside ornamentation, the gaping joints in the wooden walls, its tawdry stencil frescoes, its little auditorium with the straight-backed penitential seats, its almost flat gallery where the gods used to yell with delight at the vagaries of 'Poor Pillicoddy' (and Sothern was a good one), or thrill with excitement while *Richard III.*, covering the whole stage with a sweep of his sword, hunted for another *Richmond* to kill; the drop curtain that always swayed far enough to allow the parquette

to see the suddenly resuscitated *Richard* march off the stage without even a limp; the wonderful trees that served as a hiding place for *Jibbenainosy*, the American Indian killer—or as a bower for an oriental maiden; the 'properties' from an Italian image vendor that formed the bric-à-brac in the studio of Phidias, the sculptor; and through all, impregnating all, the lingering scent of the hay, which in the pre-theatre days, filled the old barn better than ever poor Sothern did. In this house Sothern first played *Dundreary* to genial John T. Raymond's *Asa Trenchard*. Sothern's *Dundreary* was unique, Raymond's *Trenchard* admirable. Sothern gagged *Dundreary* unmercifully, but not in the first representation. Halifax was in those days an important garrison town, and among the officers were plenty of ultra-refined gentlemen who might well have served as models for Sothern's representation."

That Sothern was at one time manager of the Halifax Theatre we have already seen,—and this peep at the difficulties under which he worked is interesting. Besides, it would now appear that it was he, and not Mr. Pinero, who first contrived

to draw "the scent of the hay over the footlights!" But concerning the first production of "Our American Cousin," the writer must have been mistaken. This undoubtedly took place at Laura Keene's Theatre, New York, and I will now quote Mr. Joseph Jefferson on the subject.

Says that admirable comedian and indisputable authority, "During the season 1858–59 Miss Keene produced Tom Taylor's play of 'Our American Cousin,' and as its success was remarkable and some noteworthy occurrences took place in connection with it, a record of its career will perhaps be interesting. The play had been submitted by Mr. Taylor's agent to another theatre, but the management failing to see anything striking in it, an adverse judgment was passed and the comedy rejected. It was next offered to Laura Keene, who also thought but little of the play, which remained neglected upon her desk for some time; but it so chanced that the business manager of the theatre, Mr. John Lutz, in turning over the leaves, fancied that he detected something in the play of a novel character. Here was a rough man, having no dramatic experience, but gifted

with keen, practical sense, who discovered at a glance an effective play, the merits of which had escaped the vigilance of older and, one would have supposed, better judges. He gave me the play to read. While it possessed but little literary merit, there was a fresh breezy atmosphere about the characters and the story that attracted me very much. I saw, too, the chance of making a strong character of the leading part, and so I was quite selfish enough to recommend the play for production.

"The reading took place in the green-room at which the ladies and gentlemen of the company were assembled, and many furtive glances were cast at Mr. Couldock and myself as the strength of *Abel Murcott* and *Asa Trenchard* were revealed. Poor Sothern sat in the corner, quite disconsolate, fearing there was nothing in the play that would suit him; and as the dismal lines of *Dundreary* were read he glanced over at me with a forlorn expression, as much as to say, 'I am cast for that dreadful part,' little dreaming that the character of the imbecile lord would turn out to be the stepping-stone of his fortune. The success of

the play proved the turning-point in the career of three persons—Laura Keene, Sothern, and myself. . . . As I have before said, Sothern was much dejected at having to play the part. He said he could do nothing with it, and certainly for the first two weeks it was a dull effort, and produced but little effect. So in despair he began to introduce extravagant business into his character, skipping about the stage, stammering and sneezing, and, in short, doing all he could to attract and distract the attention of the audience. To the surprise of every one, himself included, these antics, intended by him to injure the character, were received by the audience with delight. He was a shrewd man, as well as an effective actor, and he saw at a glance that accident had revealed to him a golden opportunity. He took advantage of it, and with cautious steps increased his speed, feeling the ground well under him as he proceeded. Before the first month was over, he stood side by side with any other character in the play ; and at the end of the run he was, in my opinion, considerably in advance of us all. And his success in London, in the same character, fully

attests, whatever may be said to the contrary, that as an extravagant, eccentric comedian in the modern range of comedy, he was quite without a rival. His performance of *Sam* which I saw at the Haymarket Theatre, in London, was a still finer piece of acting than his *Dundreary*. It was equally strong, and had the advantage of the other in not being overdrawn or extravagant."

In connection with the impersonation of *Dundreary*, my attention has been called (by Mr. Frederick Hawkins) to the late John Oxenford's admirable little essay on the subject.

"Everybody," wrote Oxenford, "goes to see *Lord Dundreary*. But ask people the simple question under what category they would place *Lord Dundreary*, whether he is to be regarded as a fool or an out-of-the-way manifestation of shrewdness, and opinions are divided. According to the Mahomedan belief, fools and madmen are inspired. Is there not something Mahomedan in the manner in which *Dundreary* is regarded? We know that he is not quite cannie; but we hold there is something oracular about his utterances. . . . He is a nature without ballast. His sense of the

ludicrous is most keen, his perceptive faculties are even over-developed. He grasps blindly at most original notions, and these slip away from him for want of tenacity of brain and continuity of thought. Power of concentration he has none. He thinks of too many things at a time, and cannot even finish an anecdote, some image totally foreign to the subject arising in his mind and chasing from his consciousness all that has gone before. The merest trifle puts him out. He has, as it were, no back to his head, and consequently no backbone to his character. Those who regard *Dundreary* as a mere stuttering fop are mistaken. He is, as we have said, a man without ballast—an incomplete man. He might have been as logical as the best of us; shone forth as a mathematician, a politician, an orator, what you will, had he not been subjected to a perpetual counteraction. He has impediments of all kinds—in speech, in gait, in eyesight, and, worst of all, in judgment. Moral respect he always commands, and none of the many laughs that are raised at his expense involve contempt. Whatever his deficiencies, he is a gentleman, a thoroughly kind-

hearted gentleman too, and one utterly incapable of intentional rudeness or ill-nature."

I quite agree with Mr. Hawkins in thinking that "no truer description of the whimsical figure which Sothern conceived, elaborated, and so perfectly represented has yet been penned."

In briefer fashion bluff and out-spoken Charles Reade has thus recorded his verdict—

"SOTHERN.—A dry humorist. I believe he professes to mesmerize, and is an imitator of the Davenport Brothers. He can get his hands out of any knot I can tie. His *Dundreary* is true comedy, not farce. He is as grave as a judge over it, and in that excellent quality a successor to Liston."

From the many "personal reminiscences" of my friend that have reached me, I gladly avail myself of the following:—

Mr. Richard Davey writes me, "I first formed the acquaintance of E. A. Sothern in 1875, when I was dramatic editor of the New York *Spirit of the Times*. Mr. B——, who was then staying at the Gramacey Park Hotel, invited me to meet Sothern at breakfast. He had spoken to me

a great deal about him, and when I entered the breakfast-room I was much disappointed at not seeing the celebrated actor. Our mutual friend led me on to express my opinion of Sothern's acting, and I very boldly said that I was extremely grieved that so fine an actor should waste his time upon such a part as *Lord Dundreary*. Mr. B—— then asked me if I knew anything about Sothern's origin, and I said what I really believed at the time—that I thought he was the son of a clergyman, and that he had annoyed his extremely religious family by going on the stage. I was about to say a few other things of a like character, when suddenly I heard a deep groan, and, to my amazement, now perceived for the first time that I was not alone with my host, for in a chair in a dark corner was, to all appearances, an elderly lady. Mr. B—— informed me that this was Mrs. Sothern, an aged relative of the actor, and I ventured upon a few commonplace remarks, to the effect that I hoped she had not been inconvenienced by the journey from England, and so forth. The venerable lady vouchsafed no answer, but continued to groan

and to twist about in an alarming manner, until on a sudden, with a hop-skip, *à la Dundreary*, she threw off a table cover (with which she had draped her knees), and her bonnet, veil, and shawl—and Sothern stood before me. 'Very glad to meet you,' said he; 'only, I am *not* the son of a clergyman; and I quite agree with you that *Dundreary* is a ludicrous caricature. But then he has put more money in my pocket than all the other parts I have ever played put together; and the proof of the pudding is in the eating, you know.' And then we sat down to breakfast, Sothern entertaining us with the funniest possible descriptions of his sea-sick fellow-passengers.

"Perhaps the most remarkable performance Sothern gave in New York was that of *Othello*. It was for a benefit, and was mainly organized by Mr. Florence.* I have every reason to believe that Sothern intended to play the part seriously, and, indeed, he read to me one morning in his rooms several scenes quite admirably. As a matter of fact, I never heard any actor pronounce the address to the senators with more artistic simplicity. The

* See *ante*.

curtain rose on a full house, there not being a vacant seat. Sothern was the *Moor of Venice;* Florence, *Iago;* and Miss Lotta, *Desdemona.* The opening scenes went well, and the address to which I have alluded was very finely rendered, and won a round of hearty applause. Everybody was wondering by this time whether we were to witness a serious or a burlesque performance. In the second act, Sothern, I believe, felt his power failing him, and thought that he could only save himself by becoming intensely ridiculous. Our first intimation of this intention was his giving one or two little hops, *à la Dundreary.* Then he shut one eye, and stuck an eye-glass in the other, and from that moment until the closing scene his clever burlesquing of the part caused incessant merriment. It would be absolutely impossible to describe the drollery of the famous scene between *Iago* and *Othello*, in which the latter throws the treacherous 'ancient' to the ground. It was simply *Lord Dundreary*, with his eccentricities accentuated, acting *Othello.* Florence, too, put on a broad Irish brogue for the benefit of *Iago;* and as to Miss Lotta, she skipped and frisked as

Desdemona, and instead of singing the 'Willow' song, produced a banjo and gave us one of her favourite 'nigger' ditties. She absolutely refused to be smothered, and played pitch and toss with the pillows, whilst *Iago* threatened to put an end to the tragedy with a fire hose. And so ended this memorable performance, which, excepting, perhaps, when Mr. George Rignold played *Romeo*, for a charitable purpose, to five *Juliets* (Sothern, by the way, formed one of the audience), has never been surpassed. . . .

"On my return to England I renewed my friendship with Sothern. Whether he had any presentiment that his end was approaching I cannot say, but it is certain that on several occasions when I was with him alone, we had conversations of a distinctly religious character. Reverence was not one of his characteristics, but, on the other hand, he could not bear profane jokes, and once when I was showing him a French caricature which parodied an event in Scripture, he exclaimed, 'I cannot stand that sort of thing!' and, snatching it from my hand, he put the obnoxious print in the fire. 'I wish,' he con-

tinued, 'that you had not shown it to me. It has put me out for the rest of the day.' This incident led to our talking of a future existence, and of revealed religion, and I recall his saying how on two occasions in his life he had, as he quaintly put it, 'been very near God.' The first was some years previously in Canterbury Cathedral, towards evening, when the light of the setting sun was streaming through the stained-glass windows. 'It seemed to me,' he said, 'that I really was in the house of God, and that by advancing down the stately aisle, I should somehow meet Him face to face. I cannot say how long I stood ruminating, but it was until the brilliant crimson light had faded, and then, to my surprise, I found myself leaning against a tomb, crying like a child, and involuntarily repeating to myself the Lord's Prayer over and over again.' The same thing, he said, occurred to him on another occasion when he was crossing the Atlantic. The sea had been very rough, but was getting calm towards evening, and the sun was setting brilliantly. 'It impressed me,' he went on to say, 'with an overpowering sense of my

own smallness and of the greatness of the Unknown; and then again the prayer came back to me, and I threw my hat off and repeated it continually as before.' He was of a very generous nature, and it is within my knowledge that he continually sent large sums of money to poor actors, and even to people whose distress he had merely read about in the papers. A few months before his death, and when it was decided that he should go to Italy, he asked me to assist him in writing a book, in which he, in the character of *Dundreary*, was to address me a series of letters describing his travels, and I was to answer him in the character of a Russian Princess, supposed to be desperately in love with him. I was to sign my letters, 'Yours, Clarissa Tartarkinsky,' the name being his own invention."

Concerning the production of "The Woman in Mauve," Mr. P. M. Feeney writes, "Sothern at this time was, as usual with any new piece, full of enthusiasm. He asked me to the first rehearsal, promising that I should see a girl with the most remarkable head of hair in London, whom he had picked up from some factory, and who had never

before appeared upon the stage. He was also anxious that I should give him my opinion about the piece. I went at the appointed time, and, passing on to the stage, noticed a slatternly girl, almost half asleep, resting against one of the scenes. This was 'The Woman in Mauve,' and she was to do little else than pose. Buckstone, incredulous as to the whole business, was in a bad temper, and he and Sothern had a somewhat amusing passage of arms, Sothern insisting on Buckstone repeating his part, until the latter put on his hat in high dudgeon and abruptly left the theatre for the consoling precincts of the Café de l'Europe, where he used a good deal of strong language as to the way in which he had been treated. I spoke to Sothern about this afterwards, and he vindicated himself by saying that there was often a good deal of looseness in leading actors when called upon to rehearse before their own company, and that he (Sothern) was not a man to allow any neglect on the part of *any* actor to escape criticism. 'He would make Buckstone give proper attention to his part.' And he did, though not without a considerable amount of trouble.

What struck me most during the frequent rehearsals of this subsequently unsuccessful play was the immense pains that Sothern took in every detail. Nothing seemed to escape his penetrating observation, and he spared no trouble in getting the mechanical accessories of the piece perfect.

"It was a little before this time, and when *Dundreary* was the rage in town, that I saw more of Sothern, and became a pretty frequent visitor in his snug dressing-room at the Haymarket, where I would sit smoking, and witnessing his transformation from a sensible, cool-headed man, in a check suit, to the elaborately-dressed, weak-headed peer. The dresser would bathe his feet in rose-water, and tenderly, as if they were sacred relics, produce from the wardrobe the magnificent masterpieces of raiment, the immortal waistcoat, the immaculate swallow-tail, the consummate shirt and necktie—Sothern, all the time he was being arrayed, working away at the inevitable cigar, and chatting about topics very far removed from things theatrical. When properly 'built up' by his dresser, and with studs, watch, chain, and

rings arranged to his satisfaction, he would compose himself in his arm-chair and proceed to tell some amusing anecdote, generally to be spoilt by the 'call boy,' who would give his signal that the 'great man' was wanted on the stage. Sothern would then place his lighted cigar on the table and disappear, and the distant roar of acclamation told me that my friend was before the footlights. After a brief interval he would calmly reappear, resume his half-smoked cigar, and finish the half-told anecdote. Nearly all these stories related to the practical jokes in which he loved to take part. Some of these I regretted, as they seemed to me to transgress the bounds of legitimate fun. On one of these 'dressing evenings' he told me how, after dining somewhere in the Strand, he seized hold of the first policeman he met, worked himself up into a state of assumed excitement, and told the constable that a terrible murder had been committed in an alley leading to an adjacent hotel, that the body was lying on the ground, and that he was dashing off to get medical advice. It was always a mystery to me how he did not in such ways get himself into

serious trouble. Very wonderful to me was the way in which, after going through the ordeal of the nightly applause of enthusiastic audiences, he would throw off the actor and appear as the good-natured host, restlessly solicitous for the comfort of his guests. We had many quiet after-theatre suppers together at The Cedars, and many a game of billiards, of which Sothern was intensely fond, and it was there that I came into contact with many of the literary and dramatic celebrities of the day, who found the most generous hospitality in a home where the host was perfect, and the hostess witty, considerate, and graceful."

To his valued friend, Mr. Sam. Timmins, Sothern wrote many characteristic letters, of which the following may serve as a specimen :—

"Edinburgh, May 26, 1863.

"Dear Timmins,

"House last night good, but not crowded. Piece a decided hit. I find out now that for twelve years this is the first time the theatre has been kept open during this period, being the worst in the whole year! Pleasant!

It is the quintessence of a bad company. Nothing *could* be worse! A wet day and a headache.

"Ever yours,

"E. A. SOTHERN."

Mr. Timmins also calls my attention to the following letter that, in October, 1867, was addressed to the editor of the *Birmingham Daily Post*:—

"SIR,

"There are few men but what feel a gratification at being in any way connected with the earlier career of those who, by their talent or genius, ultimately acquire fame and greatness. Confessing myself subject to this weakness (if weakness it be), I take the liberty of recounting 'the first appearance,' on any stage, of a gentleman who is unequivocably, at present, the most popular actor of the day. Some years ago, when I was the proprietor of the Adelphi Theatre, Glasgow, one morning a young gentleman presented himself at the theatre. He wanted to act. Would pay a handsome gratuity if his request

was complied with—only it must be that very night. 'But the bills are out, and we cannot change the pieces,' I observed. 'What do you play?' he inquired. 'The Wonder.' 'Well, allow me to play *Don Felix*, and I will take all your private boxes.' His singular and earnest manner interested me. I consented. He acted, and gained great applause. Years elapsed. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Sothern upon his late visit to Birmingham. He inquired, did I recollect the circumstance above narrated? I did. Thus Mr. Sothern made his first appearance on any stage.

"D. P. MILLER,
"Author of 'The Life of a Showman.'"

This episode, no doubt, belonged to Sothern's eager amateur days. He always spoke of the Jersey engagement to which I referred in my first chapter as his first real experience as an actor.

To my friend, T. W. Robertson, the younger, I am indebted for the following interesting letter,

written to his father concerning the comedy, "Birth":—

"DEAR TOM,

"Your resolve is sensible and plucky. I feel convinced the piece will go a season in London. The volunteers at present are too often on the stage. Once I am on the scene I should be but little of a listener. Those lines of mine in Act I. go off like rockets and are dead certainties, and the more I get of that class the more brilliantly my part goes. I'm an awfully bad long-speech actor, but give me good lines, or rapid asides, and I give the author the full benefit of every word. I don't insure this on the first night, for on that occasion my value is about thirty shillings a week. I must know I have 'got' the audience, and you understand, I am sure, what I mean. I shall play the piece in Liverpool as it is, and if it runs I shall call fresh rehearsals when I get your alterations, and wind up with it in its new form.

"Ever yours,

"E. A. SOTHERN." *

* This letter is now in the possession of Mr. Charles Wyndham, who has kindly permitted me to reproduce it.

As we know, in the super-nervous hands of Sothern, "Birth" (admirable comedy as it is) was not destined to run, and when Robertson's failing health rendered his exacting "alterations" matters of practical impossibility the impulsive actor wrote:—

"Don't worry about 'Birth.' Get well, and write me another comedy, and another, and another after that."

Finally I am reminded (and with more fitting or graceful words I cannot better end my book) of what George Augustus Sala wrote, January 29, 1881.

"And poor Edward Sothern, since I last addressed my readers, is dead and buried! It was on the 1st of last March, that arriving at San Francisco, I saw Sothern at the Baldwin House, and found him reading a cablegram from Mr. John Hollingshead about a new comedy by Mr. Gilbert, in which Sothern was to make his appearance at the Gaiety, after the engagement of Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence had come to a close. He was filling a large theatre in San

Francisco every night with enthusiastic audiences; and I saw him play *Lord Dundreary* for the fourth or fifth thousandth time—I really forget which. He was still chatty, vivacious, and charming; but he looked dreadfully ill, anxious, and worn. Some few days afterwards we met at the pretty hotel opposite the Seal Rock, at the Golden Gates of the Bay of San Francisco. We were to have lunched together; but he became, in the course of the afternoon, so ill that he was fain to lie down on a bed in one of the rooms of the hotel and try to snatch some repose until he went back to town to work. The last time that I saw him was in a private box at the London Princess's, on the first night of Mr. Booth's performance there of *Hamlet*. Poor Sothern then said that he was better, and spoke hopefully of his speedy reappearance on the stage; but he looked the very ghost of his former comely self. As the old nurses used to say, he looked 'marked for death.' Yes, on his prematurely blanched brow there was the fatal sign, *Thanatos*. Of his shining talents and distinct originality as a comedian I may speak again. As the grave closes over him I can only

say that a kindlier-hearted and more charitable man, a warmer friend, a more delightful companion, and a more urbane gentleman never lived than Edward Askew Sothern."

INDEX.

A

"A Bachelor of Arts," 18
Abbey, 239, 240
Adams, Edwin, 102, 103
"A Hero of Romance," 79, 80, 146, 155
"A Hornet's Nest," 101
Albany, 154
Albert Bressange, 78
"A Lesson for Life," 77, 78, 164
"An English Gentleman," 86
"An Incident in the Life of a Pagan Baby," 267–274
"A Regular Fix," 75, 124
Armand Duval, 16, 19, 310
Asa Trenchard, 27, 38, 46, 47, 53, 157, 316, 318
"A Threepenny Bit," 86
Augier, Emile, 80
Augustus Thrillington, 86
"A Wife Well Won," 78
"A Wild Goose," 78

B

Badminton, 181
Baltimore, 14, 147, 148
Bancroft, Mrs., 125
Bancroft, S. B., 146, 311–314
Barnum's Museum, 14
"Barwise's Book," 83–86
Belfast, 183
Benedick, 18
Beverley, 27
"Birds of a Feather," 11
Birmingham, 7, 9, 10, 25, 69, 74, 81, 94, 95, 167, 173, 181
"Birth," 82, 335, 336
Blake, Colonel, 310
Blakeley, W., 163
Bob, 312
Bob Acres, 18, 312
Booth, Edwin, 337
"Boots at the Swan," 9
Boston, 11, 161, 162, 166, 196
Boucicault, Dion, 29, 30, 161, 162, 239
"Box and Cox," 160, 163
Braid, 27
Brighton, 167
Brooklyn, 166
Brother Sam, 3, 33, 42–44, 50, 54, 65, 71, 72, 78, 103, 320
Brough, Lionel, 125
Buckstone, J. B., 14, 27, 28, 108, 125, 177, 329
"Buffalo," 145

"Bunkum Muller," 67
Byron, H. J., 57, 81, 86–88, 96, 101, 127, 128, 170, 288

C

Camille, 16, 19, 310
Cannes, 170
Canterbury, 276, 327
Captain Absolute, 311, 312
Captain Walter Maydenblush, 67, 164
Celeste, Madame, 157
Charles Chuckles, 86, 87
Charles Courtley, 18, 311
Charles Mulcraft, 83–85
Charles Surface, 18, 311, 312
Cheviot Hill, 104
Chicago Tribune, 293–296
Chippendale, 27, 125
Clark, 27
Clarke, John, 29
Clarke, John S., 167
Claude Melnotte, 2, 3, 6, 19, 74–76, 164, 309
Colonel John White, 81
Compton, Edward, 71, 106
Compton, Henry, 125, 312
Couldock, 318
Count Joannes, 97–101
Count Priuli, 146, 152
Coyne, Sterling, 153
Crabtree, 312
Craven, H. T., 83

D

Dacre, Mrs. Arthur, 281
Davey, Richard, 322
"David Garrick," 68–70, 78, 105, 111, 112, 120–122, 124, 147, 164, 173, 277
Deering, Mrs., 309
"Delicate Ground," 19
Dr. Ollapod, 312
Dr. Pangloss, 11, 18
"Douglas Stuart," 7, 8, 11–13, 15, 146, 201, 309
Drew, Mrs. John, 102
Dublin, 146
"Dundreary a Father," 58, 163
"Dundreary Married and Settled," 55

E

East Grinstead, 182
Edinburgh, 188
"Engaged," 104
"Esmeralda," 29
"Everybody's Friend," 153

F

Falconer, Edmund, 29
Farren, William, 125
Fechter, 29
Feeney, P. M., 328
Felix Featherley, 153
Feuillet, Octave, 78, 145
Fielding, 133
Fiske, Stephen, 245–248
Fitzaltamont, 88–101
Florence, W. J., 102, 224, 237, 238, 240–245, 324, 325, 336
"Flowers of the Forest," 14, 153
"Foggerty's Fairy," 105
Forrest, Mrs., 161
Frank Annerly, 73
Frank Friskley, 9, 10
Frederick Bramble, 311, 312

G

Gilbert, W. S., 104, 129, 130, 336
Gilmer, Mons., 6, 9
Glasgow, 207
Goldfinch, 312
Gossamer, 18

H

Halifax, 163, 315, 316
"Hamlet," 8
Hare, John, 125, 312, 313
Harley Street, 197
Harry Dornton, 311, 312
Harry Jasper, 18
Harry Vivian, 77
Hawkins, Frederick, 320, 322
Henrade, Miss, 27
Herbert, Miss, 29, 146
Heron, Miss Matilda, 16, 161, 162
Hollingshead, John, 336
"Home," 80, 81
Hon. Sam Slingsby, 72, 320
Horley, 182
Hounds—
  Baron Rothschild's, 191, 193
  Cheshire, 189
  Duke of Beaufort's, 181, 185, 189
  Essex Stag, 194
  Heathcote's 179, 182
  Pytchley, 182
  Queen's, 179, 180, 182, 184, 195
  Surrey Stag, 176, 195
  Warwickshire, 180
  ——, North, 180, 182, 192
H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, 78, 182, 195

I

Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, 131
Inter Ocean, 282–287
Irving, Henry, 58, 125, 174

J

James, David, 126
Jason, 153
Jefferson, J., 160, 312, 315, 317
Jenner, Sir William, 303
Jersey, 5, 7–9, 163, 309
"John Dobbs," 11
Jones, Miss Avonia, 29
Jules D'Alber, 148–152

K

Kean, Charles, 3, 9, 10, 75, 160, 308–310
Keeley, 1
Keene, Miss Laura, 17, 24, 25, 158, 159, 311, 315, 317, 319
Kendal, Mrs., 74, 125
Kendal, W. H., 125
Kensington, 116, 197

L

"La Dame aux Camélias," 16, 19, 68
Larkin, Miss, 126
"Laugh When You Can," 18
"L'Aventurière," 80
Leatherhead, 179
Lindley, Miss H., 27
Liston, 322

Liverpool, 3, 10, 19, 161, 183, 312, 335
"London Assurance," 18
Lord Dundreary, 3, 10, 16, 23–25, 27, 28, 30–34, 36–38, 40–42, 44–50, 52–55, 58, 63–67, 69, 71, 72, 81, 83, 87–89, 93, 94, 96, 97, 103, 105, 109–112, 146, 152, 154, 155, 160–162, 166, 172, 174, 177, 311, 315, 316, 318, 320–323, 328, 330, 337
Lotta, Miss, 102, 325
"Louis XI.," 311
Lutz, John, 317
Lyttleton Coke, 18, 311, 312

M

McCullough, John, 174
Marston, Dr. Westland, 73, 78, 105, 110, 146, 265
Mathews, Charles, 28, 72, 75, 110, 126
May Bowen, 195
"Medea," 29, 153
Moore, Miss Nellie, 70
Morton, John Maddison, 86, 104, 163
Mr. Gatherwool, 104
"Much Ado About Nothing," 18
"My Aunt," 19
"My Aunt's Advice," 67

N

Neilson, Miss Adelaide, 221–223
Nemours, 311
New Orleans, 155
New York, 14, 17, 18, 25, 102, 105, 145, 158, 159, 166, 172, 196, 201, 311, 317, 322, 324
"Not if I Know It!" 86
"Not Such a Fool as He Looks," 81
"Nym Crinkle," 32

O

"Old Heads and Young Hearts," 18, 311
Oliver, Miss M., 27
"Othello," 5, 29, 102, 103, 164, 258–261, 324
"Our American Cousin," 23, 27–30, 38, 44, 45, 52, 55, 63, 68, 78, 155–162, 311, 317
Oxenford, John, 72, 146, 320

P

Paris, 58
Pateman, Miss Bella, 163
"Pauline; or, A Night of Terror," 21
"Peep o' Day," 29
"Peregrine Pickle," 133
Phelps, 29
Philadelphia, 88, 89, 147, 159, 196
Phillips, Watts, 71, 146, 312
Pinero, A. W., 316
Poole, Mrs., 309
"Poor Pillicoddy," 19, 315
Portsmouth, 308
Puff, 153

Q

Queenstown, 165

R

Rachel, 126
"Rambling Reflections," 131–144
Ramsgate, 299, 300
Raphael, 18, 153
Raymond, John T., 58–60, 226–228, 316
Reade, Charles, 322
"Redemption," 145
Reece, Robert, 104
"Retribution," 146, 153
Richardson, 120, 133
Richmond, 182, 195
Rignold, George, 326
Rignold, William, 147
Robb, Donald, 315
Robert Devlin, 78
Robertson, Miss Madge, 74, 78
Robertson, T. W., 68, 80, 82, 119, 146, 334, 336
Robson, 29
Rogers, 27
Rogers, James, 29
"Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre," 78, 145, 146
Rome, 171
Roselle, Miss Amy, 172, 277–281
Royal General Theatrical Fund, 108, 110

S

St. Helier's, 5, 7, 8
St. Pierre, 19
Saker, Edward, 58, 125, 165
Saker, Mrs. Edward, 165
San Francisco, 337
Sala, George Augustus, 336
Salvini, 164
Scott, Sir Walter, 133–135
Sefton, L. J., 60, 164, 276
Sheridan Amateur Dramatic Society, 5
"She Stoops to Conquer," 18, 28
Silsby, Josiah, 157–159
Simpson, Mercer, 9, 10
Simpson, Professor, 303
Sinclair, Mrs., 161, 162
Sir Charles Coldstream, 3
"Sir Charles Grandison," 133
Sir Hugh de Brass, 75
Sir Simon Simple, 82, 87
Smith, J. C., 7, 74
Smith, Mrs. J. C., 163
Smollett, 133
Sothern, E. H., 30, 45, 104
Sothern, Lytton, 66, 172
Sothern, Mrs., 172
Southampton, 305
Spirit of the Times, 266–274, 304, 322
Spiritual Magazine, 199–207
"Suspense," 145, 148–152, 155
Sydney Spoonbill, 101

T

Taylor, Tom, 23, 44, 47, 53, 55, 77, 146, 155, 157, 158, 317
Terry, Edward, 125
Terry, Miss Ellen, 67
Terry, Miss Kate, 29
Theatres—
Adelphi, 29, 88, 157, 158, 333
Birmingham, Theatre Royal, 7, 9, 10, 25, 74, 173
——, Prince of Wales, 69
Boston, Howard Athenæum, 11, 12, 14, 161, 162
——, National, 11, 13, 14
Criterion, 105
Drury Lane, 29

Theatres—
Edinburgh, Theatre Royal, 56
Haymarket, 10, 25–28, 30, 31, 34, 55, 64, 66, 71, 72, 77, 78, 80, 82, 86, 96, 101, 108, 109, 125, 176, 189, 320, 330
Lyceum, 29
New York, Laura Keene's, 17, 23, 311, 317
——, Wallack's, 16
Olympic, 29
Princess's, 29, 310, 337
Sadler's Wells, 29
St. Helier's, 5, 8
St. James's, 29
Strand, 29, 88
Weymouth, 3
"The Actor," 106
The Athenæum, 35
"The Captain of the Watch," 86
The Cedars, 116, 182, 197, 332
"The Colleen Bawn," 29
"The Crushed Tragedian," 89–103, 107, 166, 167, 288, 289
"The Favourite of Fortune," 73, 164
"The Founder of the Family," 103
"The Gamester," 5, 27
"The Heir at Law," 11, 18
"The Highest Bidder," 104
"The Isle of St. Tropez," 29
The Kinchin, 14–16, 153.
"The Lady of Lyons," 2, 3, 6, 9, 19, 75, 309
"The Last Shilling," 86
"The Little Treasure," 67, 164
"The Marble Heart," 18, 19, 153
The Marquis of Piccadilly, 105
"The Miracle Circle," 201
"The Morning Call," 19
"The Prompter's Box," 88
"The Rivals," 18
"The Romance of a Poor Young Man," 145, 155
"The Romance of a Very Poor Young Oyster-Man," 155
"The School for Scandal," 18
The Times, 63
"The Wife," 18
"The Winter's Tale," 29
"The Woman in Mauve," 71, 312, 313, 328, 329
Thomas, Rowland, 308
Timmins, Sam., 332, 333
"Tom Jones," 133
Toole, J. L., 125, 229, 237, 251, 261–265
"Trade," 104
"Trying it On," 19
"Twenty Minutes with a Tiger," 19
"Two Can Play at That Game," 19
"Two Stars; or, The Foot-lights and the Fireside," 88

U

"Used Up," 2, 9, 19, 75
Uxbridge, 182

V

Vandenhoff, Miss, 161, 162
Vere Street, Cavendish Square, 304
Verne, Jules, 139
Victor, Marquis de Tourville, 79, 80

Vincent, Mrs. J. R., 11, 168–170
Vining, George, 146

W

Wallack, James, 16, 17, 201
Wallack, Lester, 7, 16, 161, 315
Washington, 14, 147, 148
Waverley Novels, 135
Webster, Benjamin, 157, 158, 160
Weymouth, 3, 8, 308, 310
Wigan, Alfred, 29, 146
Wilton, Miss Marie, 29
Wolverhampton, 9, 10, 146
Wood, Mrs. John, 229, 230
Wyndham, Charles, 71, 105, 335

Y

Yeo, Colonel, 309
Young, A. W., 86
Young, Mrs. Charles, 27
Young Marlow, 18

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